



Minnesota Transportation Museum

MINNEGAZETTE

May/June 1984

About the Cover

Eastbound TCRT streetcars 1300, foreground, and 1775 made a photo stop on Washington Av. SE. in the heart of the University of Minnesota on Saturday, June 19, 1954, the last day the streets of the Twin Cities would ever see the familiar yellow cars. The cars were chartered by the Minnesota Railfans Association, forerunner to the Minnesota Transportation Museum, for an all-day tour of the remaining electrified trackage of the TCRT system following abandonment of that fine street railway system the night before. The cars spent about as much time for photo stops as running on this final day. The IDS-less Minneapolis skyline can be seen in the background. Photo by **Bill Olsen**.



Special Double Issue

This issue of the *Minnegazette* commemorates two momentous events; the 30th anniversary of the end of one of the great street railway systems in the country, the Twin City Rapid Transit Co., and the COMO-HARRIET streetcar line, the last line to be abandoned by TCRT on June 18, 1954, only to rise again in museum service 17 years later.

Members responded to earlier requests in the *Minnegazette* with numerous pictures and stories of the Como-Harriet line, many of which are included in this special double issue. We hope you enjoy this reflection on the most famous of all Twin City streetcar lines, one that still lives today—the Como-Harriet Streetcar Line.

Hopefully, before we commemorate the 40th anniversary of the end of TCRT rail operations in 1994, Twin Citians will be riding the streetcar to school and to work again, in the form of light rail transit, in several corridors. Then we can refer to the 1954 abandonment of the streetcar system as a “temporary” interruption in rail service to the people of the Twin Cities.



This commemorative plaque, erected in 1981 by the Minnesota Historical Society at Lake Harriet Station at 42nd St. and Queen Av. S. in southwest Minneapolis, reminds passengers of the colorful history of the original Como-Harriet streetcar line as they wait for a ride aboard MTM's TCRT-built streetcars 1300 and 265 along a mile of the original Como-Harriet right-of-way. Photo by Fred Rhodes.

MTMer To Be Roasted

John Hemak, a long-time MTM member, will be “roasted” on Sunday, June 3 at 2:00 p.m. at the Bel Rae Ballroom in Mounds View. He is being recognized for his life-long credits as an inventor, collector, railfan, humanitarian, city official, a leader in the promotion of polka music in Minnesota and for the promotion and preservation of the Polish Heritage. Hemak, of Quincy St. “Nordeast” in Columbia Heights, also was editor of the Minnesota Railfans Association newsletter, “Cinders and Sparks.”

He has taken thousands of 16mm strip slides of rail events including a 1939 railroad fair, the Soo Line Depot, various railfan trips and last runs of TCRT streetcar lines. MTM members are urged to reserve a table at this event and help toast and roast Hemak. Tickets are only \$1. For more information, contact Tony Jambor at the Bel Rae Ballroom, phone 786-4630.

Membership Meeting May 22

The next general membership meeting is at 7:30 p.m. on Tuesday, May 22 at the Prudential Life Insurance Co., on Wayzata Blvd (highway 12) at Cedar Lake Road, just west of downtown Minneapolis. See you there!



Published bi-monthly for members in good standing of the Minnesota Transportation Museum, Inc.

Articles and photos of museum interest are always welcome and will be returned upon request.

Please address all communications to the editor,

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Bloomington, MN 55420

1984 MTM Organization Chart

April 1984



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Calendar of Events

NOTE: Some of the scheduled railroad operations are *tentative* and subject to change or cancellation.

May 22: General membership meeting, Prudential Life Ins. Co., Minneapolis.

May 26: Como-Harriet Streetcar Line opens 14th season; runs daily until Labor Day.

June 16/17: St. Paul Riverfront Days; 328 steam train.

June 18: 30th anniversary of the end of TCRT streetcar operations.

June 23/24: New Brighton Stockyard Days; 328 steam train.

July 14/15: Stillwater Lumberjack Days; 328 steam train.

July 21/22: Hopkins Raspberry Festival; 328 steam train.

Aug. 7: General membership meeting, Technical Vocational Institute, St. Paul.

Sept. 3: Como-Harriet Streetcar Line ends daily service; runs weekends only in Sept. and Oct.

Sept. 8/9: Northfield Defeat of Jesse James Days; 328 steam train.

Sept 25: General membership meeting, Northwestern National Life Ins. Co., Minneapolis.

Oct. 28: Scheduled end of Como-Harriet Streetcar Line operations in 1984.

Nov. 27: General membership meeting, Burlington Northern, St. Paul.

Membership Jets to 707

MTM membership topped 700 for the first time when the total soared to 707 on April 10, just before we started weeding out the members who had not renewed for 1984. A dunning letter was mailed out April 7 and should have received by members in the Metro area by April 10. Outstanding members not responding by mail or phone have been dropped (only temporarily I hope) prior to mailing out the May/June **Minnegazette**. They are not in the 1984 Membership Directory. However, a supplement directory will be issued in September. A complete report will appear in the next **Minnegazette**.

Railroad Division Gears Up for Spring

The Railroad Division of MTM is preparing for its fourth year of railroad operations. The following events are currently in progress.

Equipment

Rock Island commuter coach 2604 and Northern Pacific Triple Combine coach 1102 have been sent out for repairs and should be ready for the National Transportation Week run on Saturday, May 19.

Great Northern business car A-6 has one coat of paint on the ceiling and the holes in the walls are being filled and sanded. The wool carpet was removed but will be saved and 30 chairs were purchased for the car. Anyone wishing to help pay expenses by buying a chair (or part of one) may send the donation to **Russell L. Olson**, Treasurer. The cost of each chair is \$25.

Parts for the **Water Tender** are being collected. The tender is needed this summer and will be worked on weather permitting.

Great Northern passenger coaches 1096 and 1097 also will be worked on when weather and space permits.

Northern Pacific caboose 1631 is being finished up inside and out so that it can be on display to the public during our train operations.

Northern Pacific steam engine 328 has been moved to a track over a pit so that its springs can be adjusted, the brake linkage of its tender can be adjusted and other items checked. The crank pins will be ultra-sounded on both 328 and our other NP steam engine, 2156. The jacketing has been removed from the 2156 and the steel is being checked for flaws or cracks.

The steam passage to the cylinder on the fireman's side was found broken, probably from water leaking in during the summer and freezing during the winter. Outside mechanics have looked at this problem and have told us it can be fixed, but a decision has not been made if the engine is runnable. But so far it looks like it might.

Training

A fireman's class and test has been given to prospective volunteers. An engineer's class date has not as yet been set. We will be running the steam engine plus two cars the first two weekends in May so that the engineers, firemen, brakemen and conductors can get on-the-job training. We plan on running the train from the Minnesota Transfer Railway to Locke Park, then make our moves between the stockyards and Locke Park. A code class will be scheduled if interest warrants.

There's been a change in the contact for training for conductors or brakemen. Please call **Bernie Braun** at 866-0251.

Operations

Some railroads have been contacted to see if we can run over their trackage this summer. Our weekend operations at New Brighton on June 23 and 24 and at Stillwater for Lumberjack Days on July 14 and 15 are set. **Bill Champion** has the schedule at Stillwater almost finalized. It looks like we will run the train every two hours between 10 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. The schedule at New Brighton will be hourly. All other runs are pending railroad approval. If we go to the Defeat of Jesse James Days celebration at Northfield again this September, we may run over the Minneapolis, Northfield and Southern line.

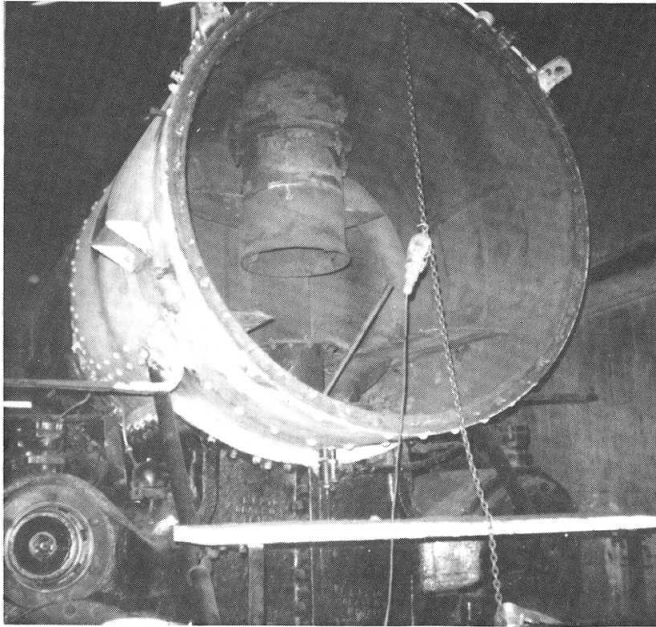
Bernard Braun
Vice President, Railroad



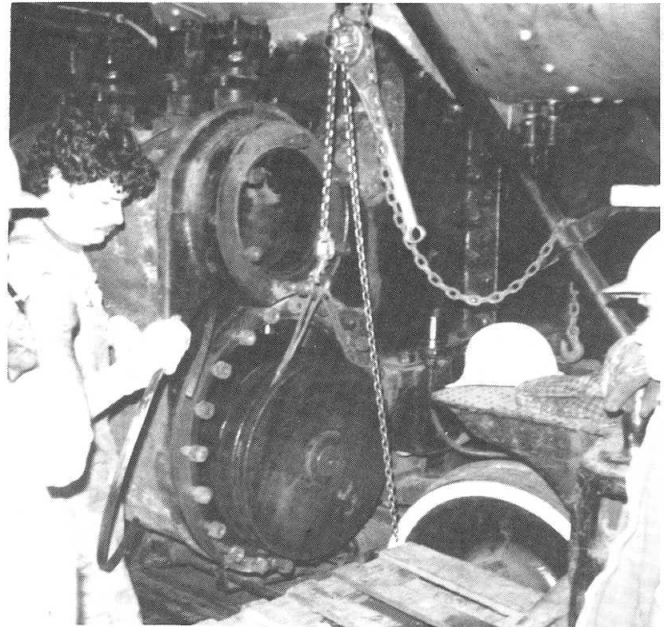
NP steam engine 2156 sitting in Como Park in St. Paul in 1955.



MTM members removed rotted material from the cab of ex-NP steam engine 2156 at the Minnesota Transfer Roundhouse. Photos by Jim Grunnet.



The inside of 2156's boiler after the removal of the nozzle and baffles.



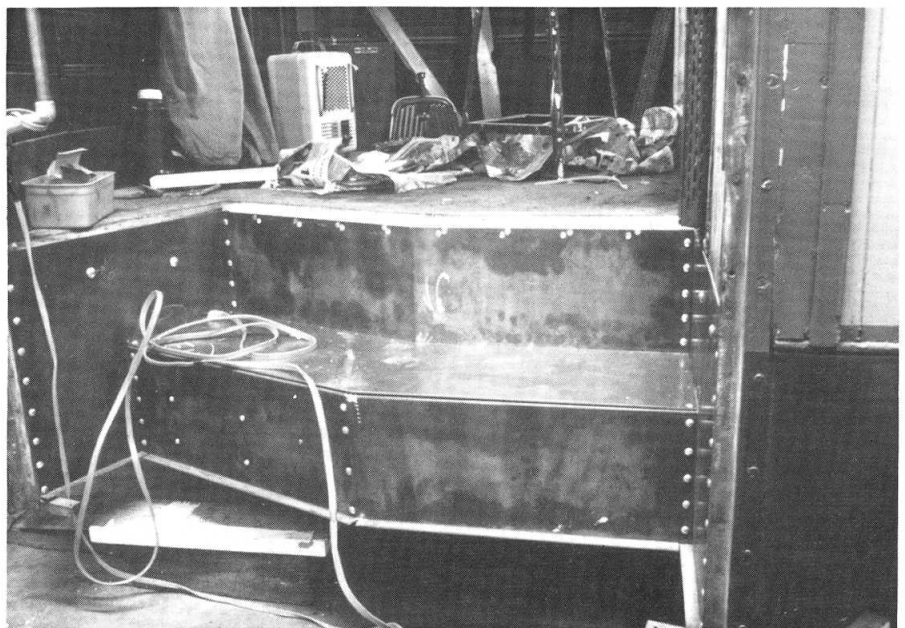
Members removed the right hand piston from engine 2156. Photos by Jim Grunnet.

We Helped Too!

A couple of hard-working MTMers wrote to let us know that they should have been included in the "railroad thank-yous" in the last issue. **Bruce Furu**, not only helps out around the Transfer but has appeared at our railroad operations thrilling the children as "Patches" the clown.

Active member **James Neubauer** came up from his home in Chicago to help us keep steam engine 328 fired up on some of our Stillwater runs last July 15 and 16. Then he wrote about his experiences on that weekend to the editor of *TRAINS* magazine for future publication. James also helps out the

fine folks at the Mid-Continent Historical Society of North Freedom, Wisconsin. Finally, he enclosed some photos of a May 1952 Minnesota Railfans Association streetcar railfan trip which will appear in future issues. Sorry for the oversight, fellas.



Out with the old and in with the new. Streetcar 1300's original (and very rusted) rear stairwell was removed from the car this past winter (standing on end, left) and replaced with a completely new, fabricated stairwell, right, by MTM's intrepid

car rebuilders. The work performed by these volunteer members is nothing short of phenomenal. The car is scheduled to be ready for revenue service, as scheduled, by the Memorial Day weekend. Photos by John Prestholdt.

COMO-HARRIET

The century-old line — that lives today!

Third in a series.

When one thinks back to a wonderful, scenic, unusual, bustling, hair-raising and just plain fun interurban streetcar line between the great cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul, the name **COMO-HARRIET** comes to mind.

Wonderful because it passed through the essence and the makeup of the Twin Cities—from the man-made canyons of the downtowns, through tree-lined residential neighborhoods and city parks on private right-of-ways, past the shores of beautiful city lakes, through the campus of the University of Minnesota, past one of the largest state fairgrounds in the United States, and past the beautiful State Capitol building—which gave the rider the complete view of both cities without leaving the car.

Scenic because of the beautiful lakes it passed and picturesque city parks it ran through.

Unusual because its route took passengers down city streets and alleys, over and under narrow bridges, through the woods and across just about every streetcar line in both cities.

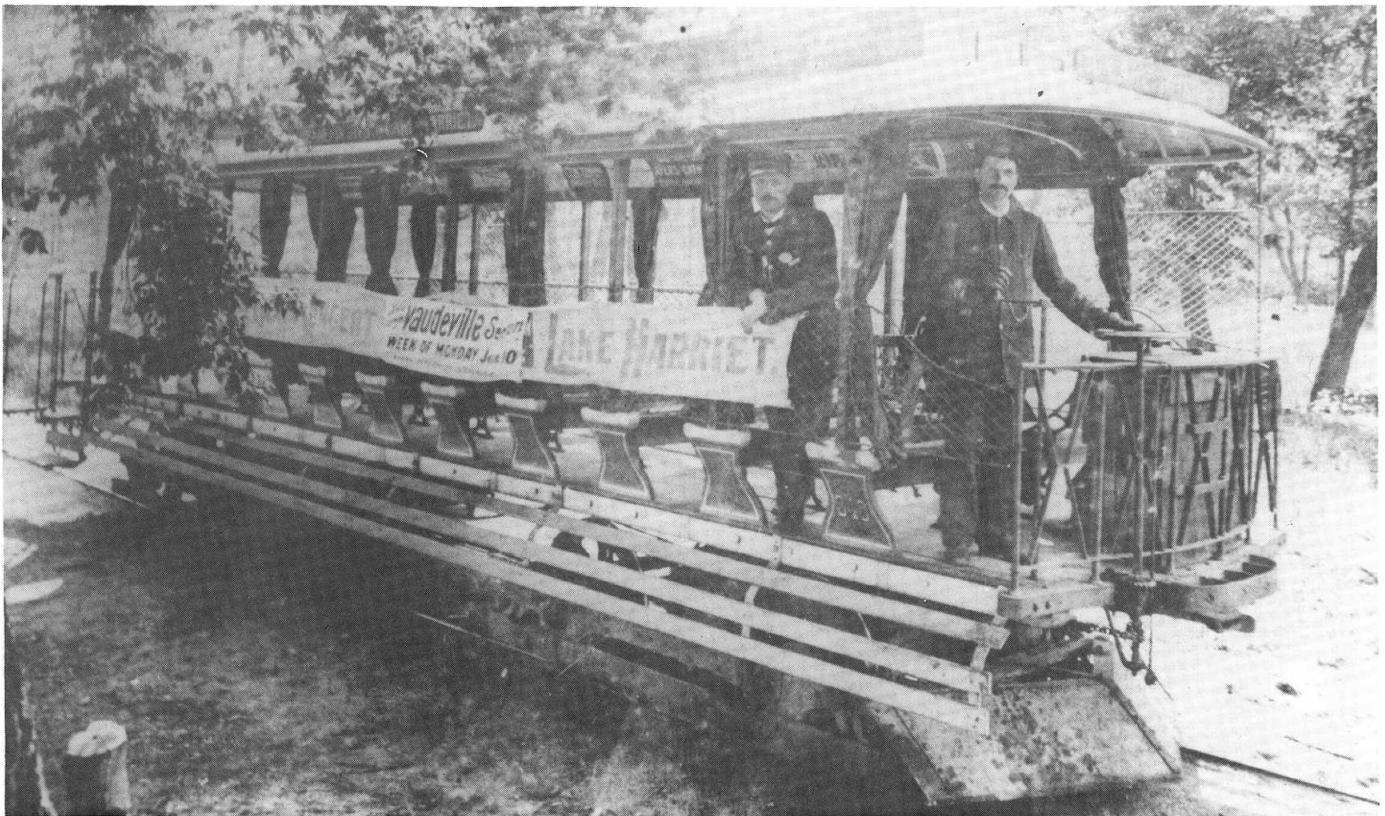
Bustling because its crowded cars fought city traffic to carry students and workers to and from the busy downtown areas and the large University in between, not to mention to and from the Lake Harriet concerts in earlier days.

Hair-raising because of its breakneck speed through the twisting, wooded right-of-way between Lakes Calhoun and Harriet and the view from the top of the Hopkins trestle on the **COMO-HOPKINS** segment.

And fun because a ride on the **COMO-HARRIET** was a combination of all of the above.

The **COMO-HARRIET** streetcar line was the second of four interurban lines established by Twin City Rapid Transit Co. (TCRT) when the **COMO AV.** line from Como Park in St. Paul was connected with the **COMO AV.** and **LAKE HARRIET** lines in Minneapolis in 1898.

The other interurban electric lines were the **TO MINNEAPOLIS** and **TO ST. PAUL** line on University Av.,



Passengers arrived at Lake Harriet in new double-deck open cars, like this 500-series car, in the 1890s for the concerts. The front roof sign reads "To Lake Harriet" while the side roof sign (partially obscured by branches) reads, "... Hennepin

Av. S. to Lake Harriet." Banners on the sides advertised the concerts and the vaudeville shows at the lake. Photo from the Gene Corbey collection.

started in 1890 (**Minnegazette**, May/June 1983), the **SELBY-LAKE** line, started in 1907 (**Minnegazette**, March/April 1982) and the **FORT SNELLING-MINNEHAHA** line, started in 1909.

Although it wasn't the fastest or busiest interurban line, or the most direct route between the two downtowns, it provided the most enjoyable ride for commuters and joyriders alike. We were lucky that it was the last streetcar line to be removed from service.

The route

For most of its service life, the **COMO-HARRIET** streetcar line operated over a route that changed little but for some minor extensions on France Av. S. on the Edina/Minneapolis border.

Over the years, the **OAK-HARRIET** line shared most of the Minneapolis route with the **COMO-HARRIET**. However, the **OAK-HARRIET** cars terminated their runs at Oak St. SE. at the University of Minnesota's main campus in Minneapolis. Southbound **OAK-HARRIET** cars followed the **COMO-HARRIET** route through the private right-of-way past Lakes Calhoun and Harriet but left the right-of-way parallel to W. 44th St. at Xerxes Av. S. and headed south to 50th St., then east on 50th to the end of the line at Penn Av. S. where it met cars from the **BRYANT-JOHNSON** line.

Between 1906 and 1932, high-speed interurban cars, capable of mile-a-minute speeds, shared the **COMO-HARRIET** line but continued west another 15 miles through Hopkins and to the resort communities of Excelsior, Deephaven and Tonka Bay located on beautiful Lake Minnetonka. That line was abandoned beyond Hopkins in 1932.

From 1906 until 1951, **COMO-HOPKINS** cars shared the **COMO-HARRIET** line but continued west on its right-of-way another 3.21 miles to downtown Hopkins just after crossing the infamous Hopkins trestle that bridged the CM&STP and M&StL railroad tracks.

This story covers mainly the **COMO-HARRIET** line portion of this busy right-of-way.

Throughout most of its busy life, the **COMO-HARRIET** line began with a clockwise loop around the heart of downtown St. Paul on Wabasha, 5th, Robert, 9th and Wabasha Sts., the same loop used by the **TO MINNEAPOLIS** and **TO ST. PAUL** cars of the University Av. Interurban line. On Wabasha, the **COMO-HARRIET** cars passed the grand high-domed State Capitol building and other state governmental buildings.

From Wabasha, the **COMO-HARRIET** ran on Rice St. to Como Av., east on Como to Front St., north on Chatsworth, then east on private right-of-way through beautiful Como Park and Zoo and near Lake Como and under the ornate concrete Lexington Pkwy. bridge.

The cars then left Como Park at Hamline Av. where they regained Como Av. trackage, then across Snelling Av. and along the southern edge of the 250-acre Minnesota State Fairgrounds, home of one of the largest State Fairs in the country. By design, that meant that all **COMO-HARRIET** cars were **FAIR GROUNDS** specials during the 10-day run of the fair each August. A special yard just off Como near Snelling at one time could hold more than 100 streetcars to handle the state fair passenger traffic.

Como Av. then became a winding thoroughfare of mostly residential homes until it reached Eustis St., the



Lake Harriet streetcars operated on their own beautifully-sodded right-of-way in the middle of Hennepin Av. between Franklin Av. and Lake St. in the mid-1890s as shown in this view looking south from near Franklin in the vicinity of

Dupont or Emerson Av. S. The electric streetcar, which reads "Harriet" in the clerestory window, probably was a rebuilt horsecar. Photo courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.

point near the Minneapolis city limits where Minneapolis and St. Paul local cars would wye. It was also the point at which the University of Minnesota **INTER CAMPUS SPECIAL** streetcars left the **COMO-HARRIET** line to proceed to the Agricultural Campus in St. Paul.

Three blocks east of Eustis St. is the city limits of Minneapolis. The **COMO-HARRIET** cars then traveled on Como Av. SE. in Minneapolis which is lined with light industry until they turned south on 15th Av. SE. and entered the northern fringe of the U of M campus in "Dinkytown."

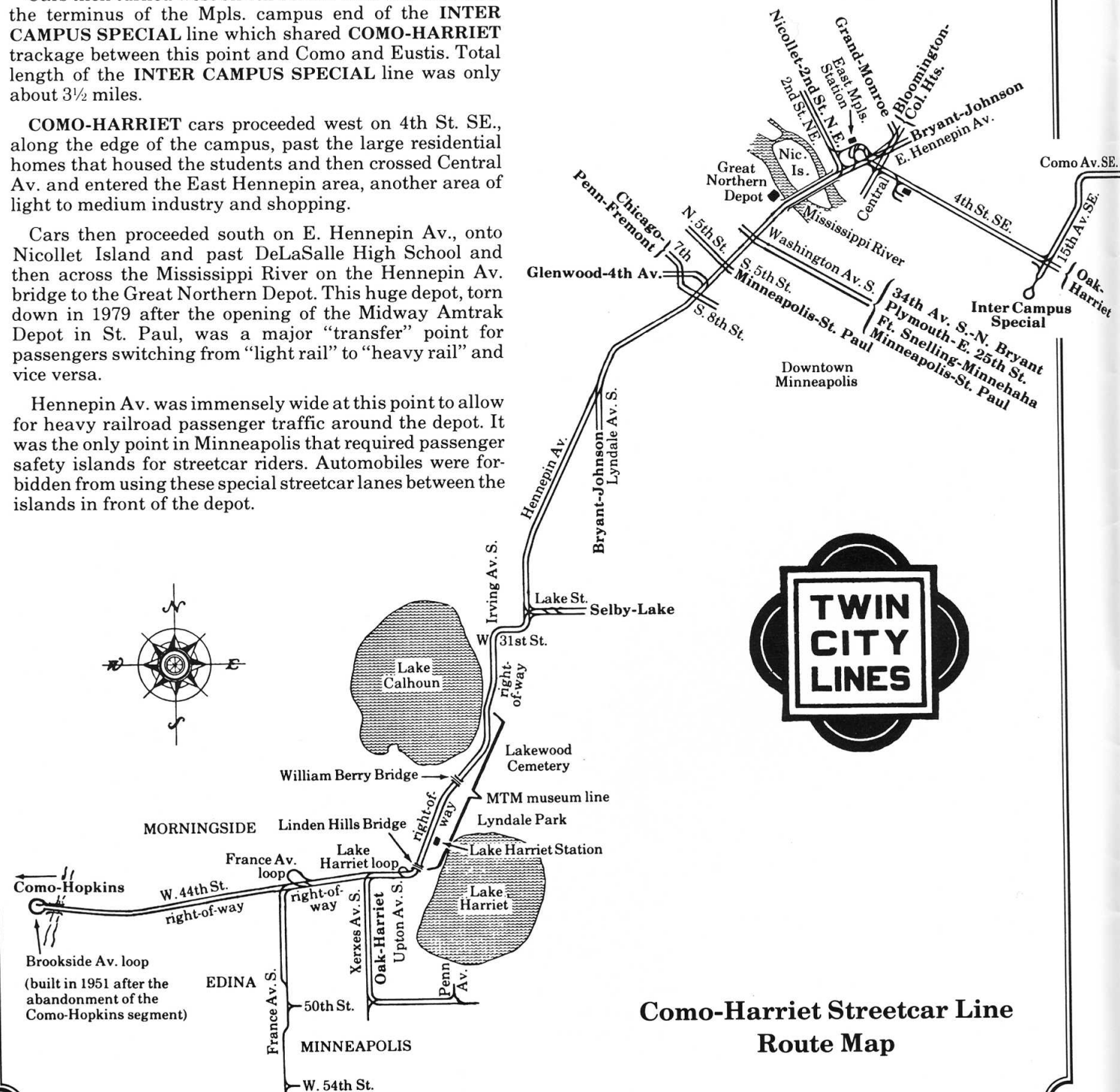
Cars then turned west on 4th St. SE. This was also near the terminus of the Mpls. campus end of the **INTER CAMPUS SPECIAL** line which shared **COMO-HARRIET** trackage between this point and Como and Eustis. Total length of the **INTER CAMPUS SPECIAL** line was only about 3½ miles.

COMO-HARRIET cars proceeded west on 4th St. SE., along the edge of the campus, past the large residential homes that housed the students and then crossed Central Av. and entered the East Hennepin area, another area of light to medium industry and shopping.

Cars then proceeded south on E. Hennepin Av., onto Nicollet Island and past DeLaSalle High School and then across the Mississippi River on the Hennepin Av. bridge to the Great Northern Depot. This huge depot, torn down in 1979 after the opening of the Midway Amtrak Depot in St. Paul, was a major "transfer" point for passengers switching from "light rail" to "heavy rail" and vice versa.

Hennepin Av. was immensely wide at this point to allow for heavy railroad passenger traffic around the depot. It was the only point in Minneapolis that required passenger safety islands for streetcar riders. Automobiles were forbidden from using these special streetcar lanes between the islands in front of the depot.

From the depot, **COMO-HARRIET** cars proceeded through the Gateway Area of lower Hennepin, an area that changed in character during the 56 years of streetcar operation from a home for immigrants to a home for the homeless. Then the cars clanked through the glittering theatre district of upper Hennepin and past the flashing marquees of the Aster, Gopher, Lyric, RKO-Pan (later Mann), State and RKO-Orpheum theatres (now all dark or gone) and out of downtown past Loring Park and through the infamous (and hair-raising) Hennepin-Lyndale "bottleneck." The I-94 Lowry Hill tunnel did away with the bottleneck in the 1970s.



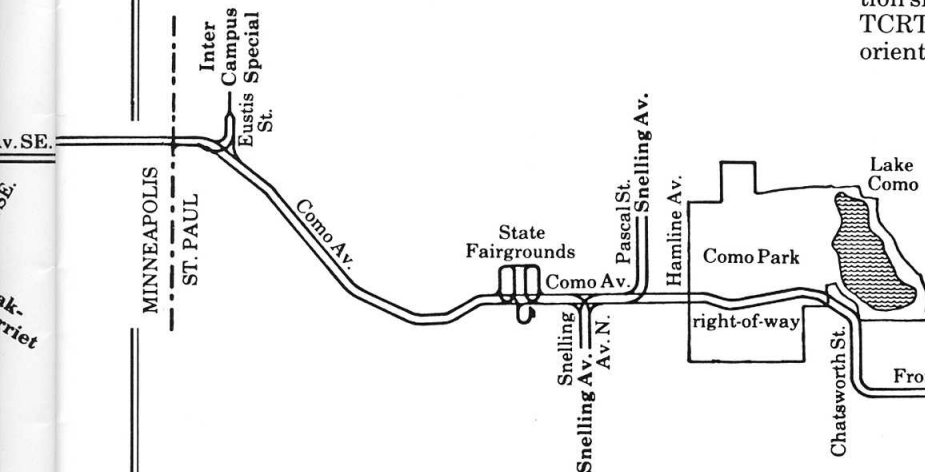
The cars then scooted through residential and light business neighborhoods, past West High School at 28th and Hennepin (closed in 1982), finally reaching their last major transfer point at Lake St., the west terminus of another great interurban line, the **SELBY-LAKE**.

Excitement grew high once cars left Lake St. and turned west from Hennepin at 31st St. and headed towards Lake Calhoun. At Irving Av. S., the cars veered southwest from 31st St. and entered the private right-of-way that would be theirs to 44th and France Av. S. with few stops in between.

The rails were no longer buried in blacktop, concrete or brick but completely exposed right down to the wooden ties. Why it looked just like a railroad track! The familiar iron bell-top overhead wire poles gave way to wooden poles. At first, the right-of-way looked more like an alley as it

The right-of-way then curved west where streetcars made their next stop, in the shopping district at Upton Av. S. From this point, the right-of-way again was surrounded by houses and garages and motormen had to crank back on their controllers a bit. Three short blocks later, the **COMO-HARRIET** cars reached Xerxes Av. S. **OAK-HARRIET** cars turned south onto Xerxes at this point for the rest of their route.

From Xerxes, the right-of-way got less private as cars had to watch every street crossing until the right-of-way ended at 44th and France. **COMO-HOPKINS** cars crossed France and continued on the right-of-way another three miles to Hopkins until that route was cut back to Brookside Av. in Edina in 1951. After 1951, cars that continued on the Hopkins right-of-way carried **COMO-HARRIET** destination signs plus window boards that read "To Brookside" as TCRT decided not to update roll signs after the bus-oriented management took over in 1950.



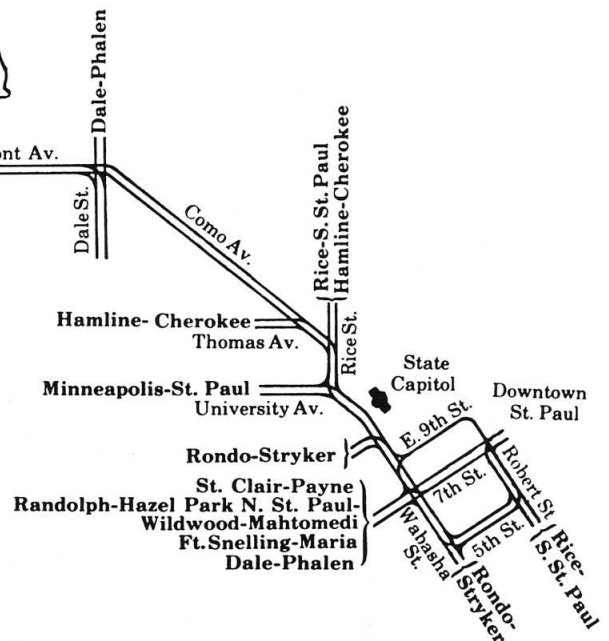
brushed past houses and garages until it reached 36th St. near the east shore of Lake Calhoun. Now the fun really began!

The cars crossed the narrow steel bridge that spanned 36th St. and the motormen turned up the controllers. Speed ranged from 40 mph to—who knows? No more houses. Just open track and woods. First past Lakewood Cemetery, then under the William Berry Rd. bridge, through Lyndale Park and finally a stop sign at Lake Harriet Station at 42nd St. parallel to Queen Av. S.

At this well-known intersection, an iron grille fence was placed between the tracks to keep passengers from wandering into the paths of streetcars headed in the opposite direction after they alighted and made way to the waiting station. The final station on the site was a sizeable one, complete with a covered platform, waiting room and a small store.

The station was torn down after the end of rail operations in 1954 but the expansive sidewalk beneath the large canopy remained and, of course, is in use today as the main passenger loading area of MTM's restored Como-Harriet Streetcar Line. A manhole cover in the sidewalk still reads "TCRT."

After leaving 42nd St. the cars continued on the wooded right-of-way as it skirted the northwest shore of Lake Harriet and passed under the Linden Hills Blvd. bridge. Tucked under that bridge today is the original MTM streetcar barn, constructed by members in 1970, that houses one of the museum's two streetcars and marks the southern end of the museum's streetcar line.



The right-of-way from the MTM barn under the Linden Hills bridge to France Av. S. still is pretty much intact. However, two portions of the right-of-way are owned by those not favorable to an extension of the museum line in that direction. Once pursued by the museum, a western extension of the line to near France Av. has all but been ruled out.

COMO-HARRIET cars then turned south off of the right-of-way onto France Av. S. which was the city limits between Minneapolis, Morningside (now part of Edina) and Edina. The cars reached their last commercial district in downtown Edina (at 50th and France) and proceeded through a residential neighborhood to the end of the line at 54th and France.

No one was heard to say they didn't get their token's worth after a ride on the **COMO-HARRIET** streetcar line.

The beginning

The COMO-HARRIET interurban streetcar line was created in 1898 by the combination of the **COMO AV.** and **LAKE HARRIET** lines in Minneapolis and the **COMO AV.** line in St. Paul. But let's go back 20 years and look at how the fragments of what was to be the **COMO-HARRIET** line were put together.

The earliest tracings of the line began in June 1878 when the **Minneapolis Street Railway Co. (MSR)** granted a lease to the newly-formed **Lyndale Railway Co.** to build a steam motor line from downtown Minneapolis to the then city limits at 26th St.

In 1879, the new company changed its name to the **Minneapolis, Lyndale & Lake Calhoun Ry.** and built a narrow-gauge (3 ft) 4.5-mile single-track steam-powered motor line from from 1st St. and Nicollet Av. to 1st Av. S. (now Marquette Av. in the downtown area), to 13th St., back to Nicollet, south on Nicollet to 31st St., west on 31st where it became a curving right-of-way along the east shore of Lake Calhoun to a small waiting station at 34th St.

Service was provided by two 0-4-2 steam motors with 37-in. drivers built by Baldwin in 1879 which pulled two second-hand 60-passenger coaches fitted with longitudinal seats. Headway was 45 minutes from 6:45 a.m. to 10:45 p.m. Travel time was 35 minutes.



The newly-built Lake Calhoun steam motor line in 1879 with the steam motor hauling two open and two closed passenger coaches from Colonel King's pavilion on Lake Calhoun, left, to downtown Minneapolis. Photo from the Russell Olson collection.

In 1880, the company extended the single-track on private right-of-way from Lake Calhoun to Lake Harriet. This is the same right-of-way in use today by MTM's restored Como-Harriet Streetcar Line. Several open passenger trailers were purchased second hand from New York and Philadelphia to handle the increasing business and added length of the line. A newspaper article at that time reported the following story.

"Travel to Lake Calhoun yesterday was large. The Motor Line cars were packed, as high as 1,200 going on a single train. Some of the motors made no stop between Washington Av. and Oak Grove St., on account of being packed so that it was impossible to take on the persons who were standing at each street corner. The police were on duty at the lake, and the best of order was preserved, although it became necessary to drive away a gang of street gamins who were making themselves obnoxious."

The company changed its name to **Minneapolis, Lyndale & Minnetonka Ry.** in 1881 to reflect its new line extension as it built a single-track from Lake Harriet to Excelsior, a distance of 15 miles. Passenger equipment was hauled by two new 2-6-0 steam locomotives with 41-in. drivers, built by Baldwin.

On June 15, 1882, the company operated its first train to the resort community of Excelsior on the shores of Lake Minnetonka. Steam engines operated between Lake Calhoun and Excelsior and the quieter steam motors between Lake Calhoun and downtown Minneapolis. Steam locomotives were not allowed on Minneapolis streets. Turntables were located at Lake Calhoun and Excelsior. Two additional 0-4-2 steam motors with 41-in. drivers, built by Baldwin, were purchased.

The Motor Line operated 11 round trips per day during the summer months. Round trip fares from downtown Minneapolis were as follows: To Lake Calhoun and back, .25; Lake Harriet, .35; and Lake Minnetonka, .75 in the summer and \$1 in the winter.

However, success of the long steam line was short-lived and, due to financial problems, trackage from Lake Calhoun to Excelsior was abandoned in 1886. But the right-of-way between Lakes Calhoun and Harriet didn't remain dormant for very long.

In 1887, the MSR leased back the Minneapolis, Lyndale & Minnetonka Ry. property and equipment, restored service to Lake Harriet and constructed a pavilion on the northwest shore of the lake and later a waiting station/platform at 42nd St. The line was operated with steam equipment until Aug. 19, 1890.

The successes of the experimental electric streetcars led to rapid deployment of the new type of streetcar in the Twin Cities. On Sept. 22, 1890, a new electric line opened (replacing the steam motor operation) from downtown Minneapolis to 31st St. By May 24, 1891, the electric line was complete out to Lake Harriet. At the same time, the track gauge was widened to standard gauge (4-ft - 8½-in.). To further call attention to this great improvement, the right-of-way from Lake Calhoun to Lake Harriet was illuminated at night by 40 powerful arc lights attached to overhead poles as a scenic attraction!

Also the same year, MSR constructed a second Lake Harriet pavilion (pagoda-styled) to replace the 1887 building that burned down, along with 35 rowboats housed there.

Track changes were made on Aug. 13, 1891 that rerouted the **LAKE HARRIET** line out Hennepin Av. instead of Nicollet Av. from downtown Minneapolis to 31st St., a route it would take the rest of its life.

Como meets Harriet

As the downtown streetcar lines began expanding toward each other, the second interurban streetcar line was created when tracks on Como Av. in Minneapolis and St. Paul were joined at the city limits on July 1, 1898, creating the **COMO-INTERURBAN** or **COMO-INTERURBAN-HARRIET** streetcar line. The University Av. line, completed in Dec. 1890, was the first interurban line.

At the same time, TCRT, which had built experimental streetcars to try and find the perfect car for Minnesota's harsh winter climate, began building its own distinctive style of double-truck cars at its construction shops at 31st and Nicollet. The first 20 cars manufactured by TCRT, numbered 739 through 758, were placed on the new **COMO-INTERURBAN-HARRIET** line.

After the new grecian-styled pavilion was built in 1904, giant crowds again swarmed to Lake Harriet for summer concerts. Another article in the local papers read, *"Harriet cars (Oak and Harriet, Como-Harriet, Como-Hopkins, and Lake Minnetonka lines) all on the same route south of downtown hummed, buzzed, and clanged out Hennepin Av. all the way from the loop to the lake and beyond. Hot busy nights would find streetcars lined up for miles, bumper to bumper, filled to the gates with passengers. The more agile young boys and men liked to ride the bumpers and the roofs."*

The glory years

The 1911 Independence Day celebration also marked the "linking of the lakes" ceremony (the opening of navigational canals between Calhoun, Isles, and Cedar Lake). People were coming out to Lake Harriet all day long and it was estimated that some 15,000 were in and around the Lake Harriet Pavilion at concert time. After the fireworks, it took until well after midnight before all of the patrons had boarded the insufficient number of streetcars and headed for home.

A recurring problem in and around Lake Harriet was crowd control. On numerous occasions, the police were present to turn away potential concert-going patrons when the pavilion was full and to keep order. To aid in the enforcement effort, the new streetcar waiting station built in 1912 at 42nd and Queen contained a room in the basement called a "calaboose" which served as a lock-up room in which arrested persons were detained until the arrival of the police patrol.

In 1916, **COMO-HARRIET** cars used the following destination signs for the following routes; **COMO-HARRIET**; **COMO-HOPKINS**; **15th & COMO** - ran from 15th Av. SE. to 44th and France; **COMO AVE. TO MPLS. LOOP** - cars coming from St. Paul to East Mpls. Station; **COMO AVE. TO EUSTIS**; and **FAIR GROUNDS** - ran from Minneapolis to Como and Snelling in St. Paul. **LAKE HARRIET** - cars ran from the Lake Harriet loop near 44th and Upton to Hennepin and 1st St., then to a wye at 1st St. and 1st Av. N.

A siding on the Lake Harriet right-of-way between Upton and Xerxes was built and used for storing extra cars



The original Lake Harriet Station and waiting room at 42nd St. and Queen Av. S. around 1900. The roof sign on the left reads "Linden Hills" while the long sign on the side roof reads "Good Things to Eat, Drink & Smoke." In the background is the giant Lake Harriet pavilion that was blown down in a windstorm in 1925. The little station/waiting room was

replaced by a much larger station/platform (shown elsewhere in this issue) which, in turn, was dismantled after the end of streetcar operations in 1954. The museum hopes to build a replica of this station at its original location as a shelter and souvenir shop for its Como-Harriet Streetcar Line passengers. Photo from the Minnesota Historical Society.

to meet the 10 p.m. evening traffic rush generated by the band concerts, pleasure boating and swimming at Lake Harriet. The siding was double-end, but during the winter months, the switch at the west end was removed.

On July 8, 1925, a windstorm struck the Lake Harriet area at about 6 p.m. and destroyed the concert pavilion, killing two people. Had the windstorm occurred an hour or two later, after the majority of the concert attendees had arrived, the loss of life would have been much greater.

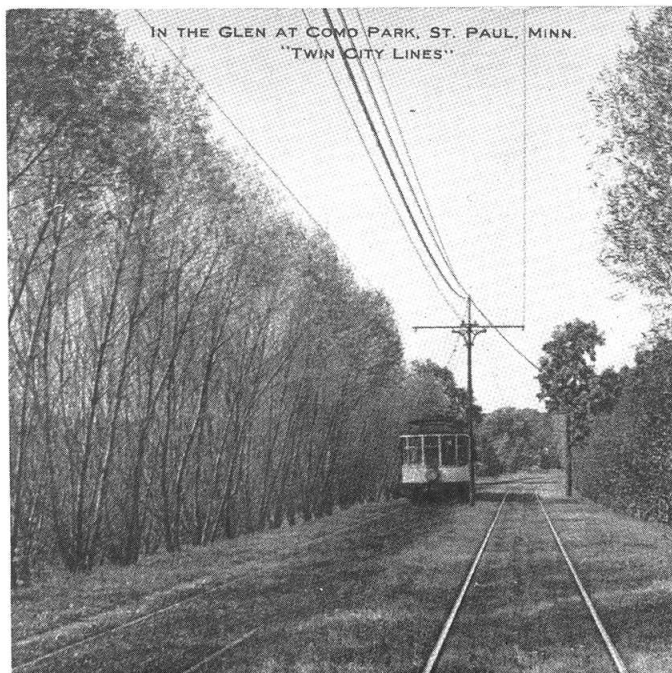
The 1925 disaster ended the era of grand pavilions at Lake Harriet. Never again did the Lake Harriet area see the immense traffic for concerts that had prevailed over the previous 40 years.

Still, the Lake Harriet right-of-way was a busy piece of scenic trackage for much of its life with four streetcar lines using it; the **COMO-HARRIET**, **OAK-HARRIET**, **COMO-HOPKINS** and **LAKE MINNETONKA** lines.

The final years

The first line to abandon the Lake Harriet right-of-way was the **LAKE MINNETONKA** line when it was cut back to 9th Av. S. in downtown Hopkins in 1932. In August 1951, the **COMO-HOPKINS** line was abandoned, but a portion of the right-of-way through Edina was kept intact. A loop was installed on the east side of the Minneapolis, Northfield & Southern railroad bridge near Brookside Av. along with a short spur inside the loop for an extra car to lay over.

Although PCC cars began running on Twin Cities lines in late 1946, the sleek, quiet streamlined cars didn't find their way onto the **COMO-HARRIET** line until late 1952 when abandonment of most of the streetcar lines began in earnest, creating a surplus of PCC cars.



A Como-Harriet streetcar passed through Como Park in St. Paul on its private right of way sometime before 1920. The center poles remained in the right of way until 1946. Postcard from the Gary Lovegren collection.

However, the PCC cars ran on the line for only about a year as they were sold off to Mexico City, Newark and Shaker Heights, Ohio. The last several months of the **COMO-HARRIET** line found service provided entirely by the old standard cars as it had been for the previous 56 years, but now all one-man operated.

Finally in the wee hours of June 19, 1954, on schedule, the **COMO-HARRIET** line came to an abrupt end when car 1166 pulled into East Side Station at 1:34 a.m., loaded with many railfans who bid the old line "Au Revoir."

Post-conversion wrapup

Although the MRA railfan trip of June 19, 1954 was the last rail passenger service provided by TCRT, streetcars were seen briefly on city streets several days later. The streetcars that ran on the **COMO-HARRIET**, **OAK-HARRIET** and **INTER CAMPUS SPECIAL** lines were all stationed at East Side Station. All of these cars made their last one-way trips to Snelling Station the following Monday and Tuesday for their final disposition. The last car to leave East Side Station for Snelling Shops was car 1756 on Tuesday, June 22.

Finally, a few nights later (exact date unknown), car 1767 apparently was TCRT's last car to operate on city streets when it made a midnight run from the Snelling Shops on University Av. to Emerald St. SE. at the Minneapolis city limits and return on an electrical errand. For sure, no cars ran after July 2, 1954 as that is the day TCRT turned off the electricity.

Both "last trip" special cars 1300 and 1775 were to be saved for museum purposes but 1775 somehow lost out and turned out to be the last car of TCRT to be dismantled and burned—on August 13, 1954. Car 1300 remained at Snelling Shops until September 17, 1954 when it was moved off TCRT property. Some recall TCRT threatening the MRA to "get that car off our property or it will suffer the same fate as the other cars!" The next day, the Milwaukee Road moved car 1300 to temporary storage in Hopkins where it would await its future.

A Day in the Life of the Como-Oak-Harriet-Hopkins Line (Oct. 21, 1947)

The Lake Harriet right-of-way was a busy one in 1947, 24 hours a day. In addition to as many as 77 streetcars on the line at once, all operating out of East Side Station, Snelling Station operated one St. Paul local during the morning rush hour.

Carhouse and Line	Number of Streetcars				
	AM	Day	PM	Nite	Owl
East Side Station					
Como-Harriet and Como-Hopkins	52	27	50	13	3
Oak-Harriet	24	12	24	8	1
Snelling Station					
Como Av. local	1	0	0	0	0
Totals	77	39	74	21	4
Speeds (mph)	10.3	11.9	10.3	12.2	13.6
System Average	11.4	12.6	11.4	12.8	14.2

Como-Harriet's future

There probably never will be a regular service Como-Harriet streetcar line again. No proposed light rail transit corridors include any portion of the former streetcar line. However, a proposed new Hennepin Av. bridge connecting Nicollet Island with downtown Minneapolis (the Como-Harriet used to run over the old bridge) includes four lanes for vehicle traffic and two lanes for possible light rail transit tracks. Interesting.



Highlights of the Como-Harriet Streetcar Line

- May 19, 1879 Narrow-gauge single-track steam-powered motor line constructed from 1st St. and Nicollet Av. in downtown Minneapolis to 1st Av. S., to 13th St., to Nicollet, to 31st St., west on a curving right-of-way along the east shore of Lake Calhoun to a small waiting station at 34th St. Service provided by two 0-4-2 steam motors which pulled two second-hand 60-passenger coaches.
- 1880 Single-track extended on private right-of-way from Lake Calhoun to Lake Harriet; now today's museum streetcar route.
- 1881 Single-track extension from Lake Harriet to Excelsior. Passenger equipment hauled by two 2-6-0 steam locomotives.
- June 15, 1882 First train ran to Excelsior on the shores of Lake Minnetonka.
- 1886 Trackage from Lake Calhoun to Excelsior was abandoned.
- 1887 Minneapolis, Lyndale & Minnetonka Ry. property and equipment leased to MSR which restored service to Lake Harriet. Operated with steam equipment until 1889.
- Aug. 19, 1890 Last steam motor passenger operation.
- Sept. 22, 1890 New electric line opened (replacing steam motor operation) from downtown Minneapolis to 31st St.



One of the first electric streetcars to use the Lake Harriet right-of-way was this single-track, short open car, No. 678, bearing the "Lake Harriet" sign in the early 1890s. The car was built by the American Car Co. in 1893 and had a relatively short life. It was scrapped in 1908, the same year car 1300 was built. Photo from the Gene Corbey collection.

Museum Line Follows Original Line Closely

MTM's restored Como-Harriet Streetcar Line is a fully authentic recreation of a portion of the original line. Though now only about a mile in length, most of the route follows the right-of-way laid out by the **Minneapolis, Lyndale and Lake Calhoun Railway** more than 100 years ago.

The single-track narrow-gauge line gave way to a double-track standard gauge line with the introduction of electric cars in 1891. The line then remained basically unchanged until abandonment of the street railway system in 1954. TCRT quickly removed the rails for salvage.

When MTM relaid the rails in 1970 and 1971, members spiked down the museum's single track directly on TCRT's old southbound trackbed from the Linden Hills bridge to the pedestrian overpass just north of 42nd St. The concrete overpass still had the old track anchors so alignment at that point was fairly accurate. The passing siding at 42nd St. was laid on TCRT's old northbound mainline from 42nd St., north across the overpass and about 200 feet down the wooded right-of-way.

North of that point, the single track was laid in the middle of the old double-track right-of-way since the museum does not plan on laying a second mainline track. The track goes under the center of the William Berry bridge. Here, the route's identical match to the original line ends.

TCRT cars used to sail on past the William Berry bridge fairly straight to the 36th St. bridge about four blocks away, which explains why they were able to reach such high speeds through the area.

After the abandonment of the Como-Harriet line in 1954, Lakewood Cemetery annexed all of the TCRT right-of-way and some of the land west of it from the William Berry bridge north to 36th St.

When members laid rail north of the bridge in the early 1970s, they had to plow through banks of dirt and cut down trees that had sprouted up since 1954. The track, instead of going straight ahead, had to be laid on a half-left curve and follow the cemetery fence to Lake Calhoun to its current stop at

- Feb. 6, 1891 Original Lake Harriet pavilion destroyed by fire.
- Feb. 28, 1891 **COMO AV.** line began service in St. Paul from 5th and Robert, via Robert, 8th, Wabasha, Rice, Como, to Dale. All double track.
- May 24, 1891 Electrification of line to Lake Harriet completed. Track gauge widened to standard gauge (4-ft - 8½-in.). Right-of-way from Lake Calhoun to Lake Harriet illuminated at night by 40 powerful arc lights attached to overhead poles as a scenic attraction.
- June 14, 1891 **COMO AV.** line began service in Minneapolis from 1st and Hennepin, via E. Hennepin to 4th St. SE., 15th Av. SE. to Como Av. SE.
- July 31, 1891 **COMO AV.** line in St. Paul changed to run on Como Av., Front, and Chatsworth to Como Park.
- Aug. 13, 1891 **LAKE HARRIET** line routed out Hennepin Av. instead of Nicollet Av. from downtown Minneapolis to 31st St.
- 1892 **LAKE HARRIET** line thru-routed with **CENTRAL AV.** line.
- Sept. 7, 1892 Double-track built on Como Av. in St. Paul from Front and Dale Sts. to Como Park.
- Nov. 2, 1892 **LAKE HARRIET** thru-routing with **CENTRAL AV.** line discontinued. Began downtown loop using Hennepin, Washington, 1st Av. S., High St., 1st St. and Hennepin.
- 1894 **COMO AV.** line in Minneapolis thru-routed with **BRYNMAWR** line.
- July 1, 1898 Double track built on Como Av. SE. from 15th Av. SE. in Minneapolis to Eustis St. just inside the city limits of St. Paul. Double track built on Como Av. in St. Paul from Como Park to Eustis St. This formed the second interurban line between Minneapolis and St. Paul called **COMO-INTERURBAN** or **COMO-INTERURBAN-HARRIET**.
- July 13, 1898 Double track built on Como Av. in St. Paul from Snelling Av. to Langford Av.



An unidentified motorman (badge number 325), left, and conductor (badge number 352) sat aboard their Como-Harriet line streetcar in about 1910. Motormen were assigned odd-numbered badges while conductors received even-numbered badges. Note the coin changer on the conductor. Postcard from the Gary Lovegren collection.

about 37th St. At that point, MTM's track is at least 100 feet west of the original right-of-way.

In 1954, the old 36th St. streetcar bridge was dismantled, the stone block walls removed and the banks graded back into gentle slopes on both sides of 36th St. An extension of the line northward over the old right-of-way is out of the question. If an extension of the line is made to Lake St., seven blocks away, it would have to follow (or operate on) E. Lake Calhoun Blvd. to the boat house and ship's mast at Lake St.



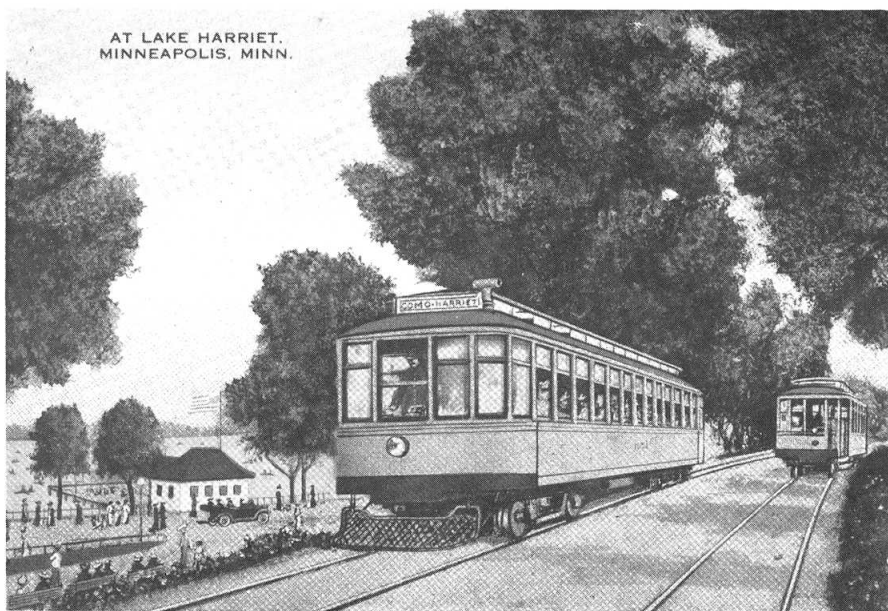
Running the Como-Harriet in the Early 1940s

In the spring of 1943 I met Charles Sulzbach busy organizing the Minnesota Railfans Association to charter trolley tours. He said they were hiring over at Snelling Station and I got enough courage at age 15½ years to apply.

On July 28 I found myself in training at East Side Station as Conductor number two. To deflate my ego, my instructors urged me to go see my predecessor, old Joe Walsh at 23 4th St. SE. Not until I stood before his coffin did I realize it was their gentle way of putting me in my place.

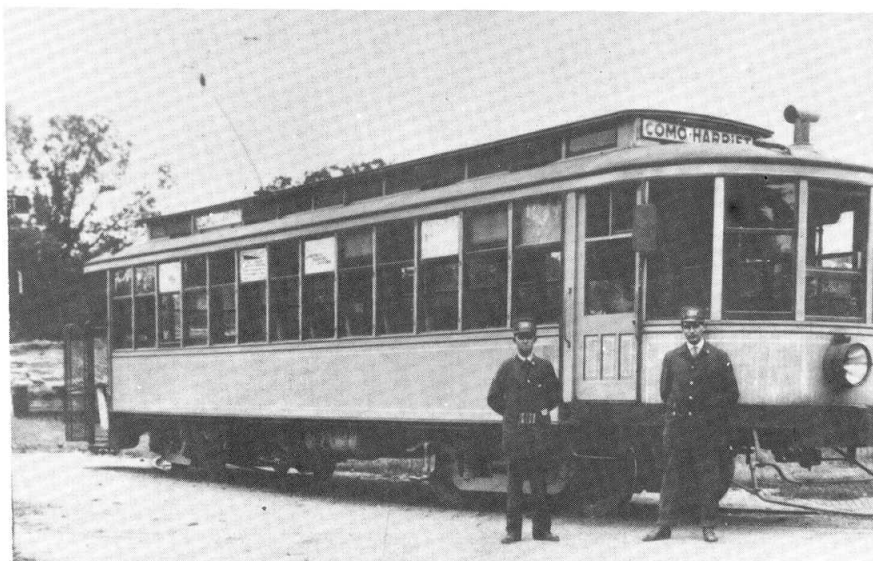
After a few months I returned to high school on Nicollet Island and found I could still take both a morning and evening rush hour run from nearby East Side Station. Still, we had to alter the family schedule a bit. At 5 a.m., I'd catch the **GRAND-MONROE** car inbound and leave my bowl of oatmeal on the newspaper stand for mom to pick up on her way to work.

There was always a hassle around the super's cage where we all "plugged" in on the assignment board. If someone missed, there was always a quick scramble to eliminate the one-man runs, and hope that some student didn't sneak a motorman's spot. I waited for a year to try it and got my **COMO-HARRIET** car out to the 44th St. loop at France Av. before the Inspector caught up. He was a nice man but ill-at-ease with the students.



Two Como-Harriet streetcars passed each other on the right-of-way near Lake Harriet as shown in this 1916 color postcard from the Gary Lovegren collection.

- 1902 **COMO AV.** line in Minneapolis thru-routed with **KENWOOD PARK**. Part of service thru-routed on Hennepin Av. with **LAKE HARRIET** line. Part of **LAKE HARRIET** line thru-routed with **OAK ST.** line.
- 1904 New Lake Harriet pavilion constructed on the northwest shore of Lake Harriet after the second one burned down in the winter of 1903.
- 1905 **COMO AV.** thru-routing with **KENWOOD PARK** line in Minneapolis discontinued.
- Sept. 15, 1905 Trackage on 31st St. between Nicollet and Hennepin abandoned. Private right-of-way extended to Lake Minnetonka once again.
- March 31, 1906 A crossover was installed 300 ft west of the Lake Harriet platform on the Harriet right-of-way.



Como-Harriet car 1389, possibly on the Lake Harriet loop, between 1910 and 1920. Photo from the Gene Corbey collection.

When they pulled the fires out early in 1944 to save coal, I hung a "This Car Heated" sign on the outside of our electric-heated gate cars.

The **COMO-HARRIET-HOPKINS** run was a 3-hour+ round trip with only one layover, on the west end. You only had to make three round trips to complete a full shift. There were three fare zones in Minneapolis and St. Paul and four more in and out of Hopkins.

The worst run, always left to new men, was #66 that somehow hit all the theatre closings on Saturday night and caught the last ride for sailors avoiding AWOL/curfew at the University. We often had head counts exceeding 200! Then totaling up the cash forced me to miss the owl car home, which meant sleeping overnight at the station.

Sleeping upstairs at East Side was nothing short of traumatic. There were no sheets, just grey blankets on army cots thoughtfully stained by the snooze chewers. The old wooden barn would shudder as each car rumbled in and out, and the thought of all those trolley poles still on the wire, with the fire warnings, made deep sleep a costly luxury.

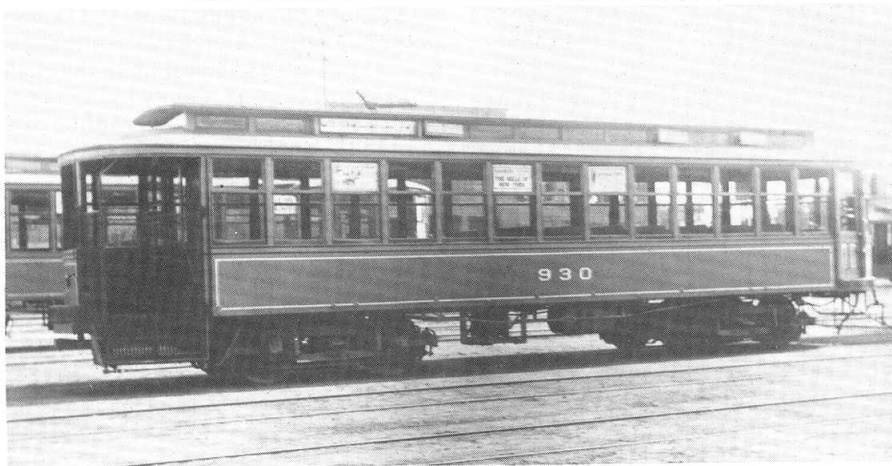
Our pay was .66 per hour with all the free rides we wanted. Not until the High School graduation dance did I realize the cost of a private automobile.

Streetcar service on Hennepin Av. was every six minutes until midnight and every 30 seconds during rush hours. Twin City Lines proudly proclaimed it moved 10,000 people per hour on Hennepin while six lanes of automobiles could move only 3,000 people per hour on 3rd Av. S.

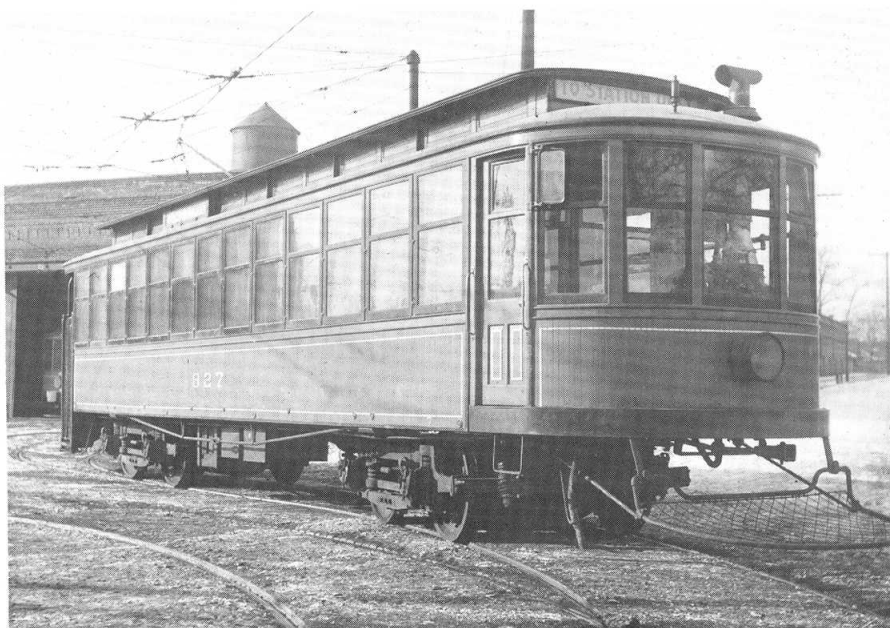
We were a team of professionals that could move even the Monday morning grumps at that pace; but you had to know the tricks. In pay-leave zones, you sold your tokens up and down the aisle before major stops. You had to have your two bells in just as the surge up the back stairs weakened. Fare boxes were flushed after leaving the loop and all questions were held until the last fare was paid!

It got to be a thrill to hustle the crowd; and, I surely miss this now at Lake Harriet when safety rules prevent standees. For a few concert nights in years past, we did pack them in and the excitement caught on even for museum riders who never experienced wartime loads.

- June 16, 1906 **COMO-HOPKINS** service began over **COMO-HARRIET** trackage; operated to 9th Av. S. in Hopkins between 1st St. and Excelsior Av. Part of service from St. Paul operated through to Hopkins.
- June 5, 1909 **COMO-HARRIET** service extended from Lake Harriet to 44th and France; **OAK-HARRIET** cars continued to terminate at Lake Harriet.
- Oct. 1, 1913 **OAK-HARRIET** service extended from Lake Harriet to Xerxes. Double track built on Xerxes from the right-of-way south to 50th St.
- 1920 Double track built on E. Hennepin Av. from Johnson St. NE. to 17th Av. SE.
- Sept. 3, 1921 Temporary route in downtown St. Paul; in via Wabasha, 5th. to wye at Sibley; out via 5th to Robert.



TCRT car 930 before 1920 when the company used silver pin-striping with silver numbers on the cars. This car was placed on the Como-Harriet streetcar line immediately after it was built in 1902. Car 930 was scrapped in 1934. Photo from the MTM files.



TCRT car 827 in front of East Mpls. Station before 1920. The front roof sign reads "To Station Only" while the gate side sign reads "Oak & Xerxes." Car 827 was built by TCRT in 1900 and was sold to the Tacoma (Wash.) Municipal Belt Line Ry. in May, 1918. Photo from the MTM files.

To excite the railfan, there were the mysterious sections in the rule book that dealt with wire breaks in high-speed service and the company phone number at the Excelsior boat yards. I remember trying to use an old wooden phone at the Lake Harriet loop right in back of the present Linden Hills barn. Even the crackle didn't prevent an angry operator demanding to know who was calling and why we had stopped there!

Several of my motormen remembered the rare double-decker cars and thought that a rebuilt 1100-series car, formerly a double-decker, was still at East Side. "Look for the alterations in the ceiling," they would say, or was it just another rouse?

It was a happy time that ended all too soon. With graduation and the war's end, the crowds dispersed. I will always be grateful to all my friends who worked so hard to recreate this adventure back on the Glen line. Charlie Sulzbach's grave in adjacent Lakewood cemetery is within sight just north of the 39th-40th St. (William Berry) bridge as if to watch us grow the seed he planted in the 1940s. Now the Como-Harriet line is a new legend equal to any of its long past.

Bill Olsen
Minneapolis



Como-Harriet Fair Grounds Specials

My recollections on **COMO-HARRIET** began in July 1946 as I was a motorman working out of the Duluth Av. Station on E. 7th St. and Duluth Av. in St. Paul, badge No. 3669. Today, I'd be pretty much on top of the seniority list, had I stayed on, but old Charlie Green and Fred Ossanna took the enjoyment out of streetcarring (they took the streetcars). I resigned in late 1953 with only a skeleton of a streetcar system left.

No **COMO-HARRIET** runs worked out of Duluth Station, but we had to know the St. Paul end as far as the wye on Como and Eustis as **FAIR GROUNDS** extras ran out of Duluth Station during Fair Week.

- Oct. 29, 1921 Downtown St. Paul loop via Wabasha, 5th, Robert, 9th, Wabasha.
- 1925 Lake Harriet pavilion destroyed in a windstorm.
- Oct. 9, 1925 **COMO-HARRIET** service extended south on France Av. from 44th to 50th Sts. (single track).
- July 20, 1929 Second track added on France Av. S. from 44th to 50th Sts.
- Sept. 16, 1929 Single track built on France from 50th to 54th Sts.
- Sept. 20, 1931 **COMO-HOPKINS** service to Deephaven cut back to Sundays only.
- Nov. 10, 1934 Began one-man owl service; 50th St. wye on France moved to 51st St.
- Jan. 9, 1939 Lake Harriet loop at 44th and Upton removed from service. The switches and the crossing on the main line were removed but the loop itself was not removed until 1950.
- Nov. 15, 1947 Second track added on France from 50th to 51st St. This was the last track extensions to be built by TCRT.
- Aug. 4, 1951 **COMO-HOPKINS** line discontinued; line cut back to Brookside Av. in Edina, served by some **COMO-HARRIET** cars.
- April 4, 1952 Began extensive one-man service.
- Aug. 11, 1952 Trackage on France Av. S. from 44th to 54th Sts. abandoned.
- Oct. 1, 1952 Began partial PCC service.
- July 11, 1953 St. Paul portion of **COMO-HARRIET** line abandoned (east of Eustis St.). However, Minneapolis **COMO-HARRIET** cars operated through service to the state fair grounds at Como and Snelling from Aug. 29 to Sept. 7 during the 10-day run of the State Fair. Began all one-man service.
- June 18, 1954 **COMO-HARRIET** streetcar line abandoned; end of all rail operations.
- June 19, 1954 Minnesota Railfans Association chartered cars 1300 and 1775 for a final ride over all electrified abandoned trackage. TCRT donated car 1300 to the MRA.
- 1962 The Minnesota Transportation Museum was created from the MRA and assumed ownership of car 1300 which was in storage at the Minneapolis-Moline plant in Hopkins.
- 1968 The MTM approached the Minneapolis Park Board with a proposal to reopen a portion of the former Como-Harriet right-of-way as a museum streetcar line using ex-TCRT streetcar 1300. The idea was accepted.
- Aug. 28, 1971 MTM reopened a 1,400 ft. single-track portion of the former **COMO-HARRIET** right-of-way from the Linden Hills bridge to just north of 42nd St. using streetcar 1300, powered by a gasoline engine-powered electric generator towed behind the car.
- 1972 Single track extended to 2,600 ft.
- Aug. 23, 1973 Car 1300 began operation using overhead wire.
- Sept. 3, 1977 First run over line extension to Lake Calhoun on its current length of 4,670 ft.
- July 24, 1982 TCRT-built ex-Duluth streetcar 265 joined 1300 in revenue service on the **COMO-HARRIET** streetcar line; museum line carried its half-millionth passenger since the reopening of the line in 1971.
- May 26, 1984 MTM begins its 14th season of museum service on the **COMO-HARRIET** streetcar line. Live a little history and join us for a ride down the historic right-of-way this summer!

My first and only experience driving a gate car came when I had to practice the line. I would continually bang the rear gates after stops. I just couldn't pick up the rhythm. (The gates were operated mechanically; a large handle in the cab controlled rods that ran the length of the car to open and shut the gates. One-man/two-man cars had air-operated doors controlled by a toggle switch.)

The old conductor would come up to the cab and make a remark that if I didn't learn how to close the gates properly, I wouldn't have a job; he said he'd turn me in. I was 23 at the time and could care less—there was plenty of work around, the war was over. At any rate, that was the only time I worked with the man and my only experience on a gate car.

During State Fair week, the many times I drove through Como Park, I operated a one-man car. I even ran a PCC car to the fair grounds. Pulling in one evening, the starter at 7th and Wabasha in downtown St. Paul stopped me (could it have been **Earl Anderson**? See another story in this issue.) and asked me to make a fill-in to the Fair Grounds. Quite a thrill, I thought at the time, rolling through Como Park in one of the new PCC cars. People took a second look as the PCC car was not used on the **COMO-HARRIET** line at that time.

Coming into the Fair Grounds loop, St. Paul cars stayed on one side—Minneapolis cars on the other. It was late summer and the smell of hamburgers, the sounds of the fair—the passengers were always in a good mood of fun, that was real enjoyment.

There was one old streetcar, I don't remember the number—eleven something (*Ed. note: it was 1136*) that was used for an office car and stood in the middle of the loop. The only time it left Snelling Station was during Fair Week.

Well, that's it. Had Charlie Green stayed in New York, I would still be running through Como Park during Fair Week instead of running a printing press.

Ken Johnson
Stillwater, Minnesota



Thanks

Many thanks to the members and nonmembers who, through words or pictures, contributed to this story; Earl Anderson, Gordon Bassett, Jim Bertrand, Mike Buck, Frank Butts, Gene Corbey, Clark Johnson, Ken Johnson, Jim Kreuzberger, Art Kromer, Gary Lovegren, Robert Mehlenbeck, Bill Olsen, Russell Olson, Fred Rhodes, Gerald Robertson, R. Donald Ross, Cliff Scholes, Larry Schreiber, Emil Skok, Lowell Wood and the *Minneapolis Star and Tribune*.

Statistical information compiled from two great books; *Interurbans Special No. 14 - Electric Railways of Minneapolis & St. Paul* (out of print) and Russell L. Olson's *The Electric Railways of Minnesota*.



"Como-Harriet to 54th" car westbound on the Lake Harriet right-of-way as it approached Upton Av. S. in July 1953. Photo by C. R. Scholes.



Does this intersection look familiar? This view is looking south from under the canopy of the Lake Harriet Station/Waiting Platform at 42nd St. and Queen Av. S. in August 1931. The two gate cars are of the 1200- or 1300-series. No. 1300 could be one of them as it wasn't rebuilt for one-man/two-man operation until November 1931. The northbound car is an Oak-Xerxes car which shared Como-Harriet trackage from Oak St. and Beacon (see window sign) at the University of Minnesota to W. 44th St. and Xerxes Av. S. where it left the

Como-Harriet right-of-way and headed south on Xerxes. Note the marker brackets on the front of the car which were used on Lake Minnetonka runs over this same right-of-way. Trackage to Lake Minnetonka was abandoned in August 1932. The Oak-Harriet (and Oak-Xerxes) lines remained in service with the Como-Harriet until the very end in June 1954. The fence kept passengers from crossing into the paths of oncoming streetcars from the opposite direction. Photo by Robert Mehlenbeck.

TCRT Abandoned Streetcar System 30 Years Ago

In 1954, Dwight Eisenhower was President, the U.S. was only a year out of the Korean war and the people were watching first-run episodes of *I Love Lucy*. In the Twin Cities, there was only one major league sports team—the World Champion NBA Minneapolis Lakers. Twin Citians watched the American Association St. Paul Saints play baseball at Lexington Park and the Minneapolis Millers play at Nicollet Park, across 31st St. from TCRT's Nicollet Station.

The tallest building was the 32-story Foshay Tower. The smoke of the fast-disappearing steam engines could still be seen in parts of the Twin Cities. Northern Pacific 4-6-0 steam engine 328, which had been removed from service earlier, was placed on permanent display in a Stillwater park. And the people of the Twin Cities took their last streetcar rides in regular service. Yes, it's been a while.

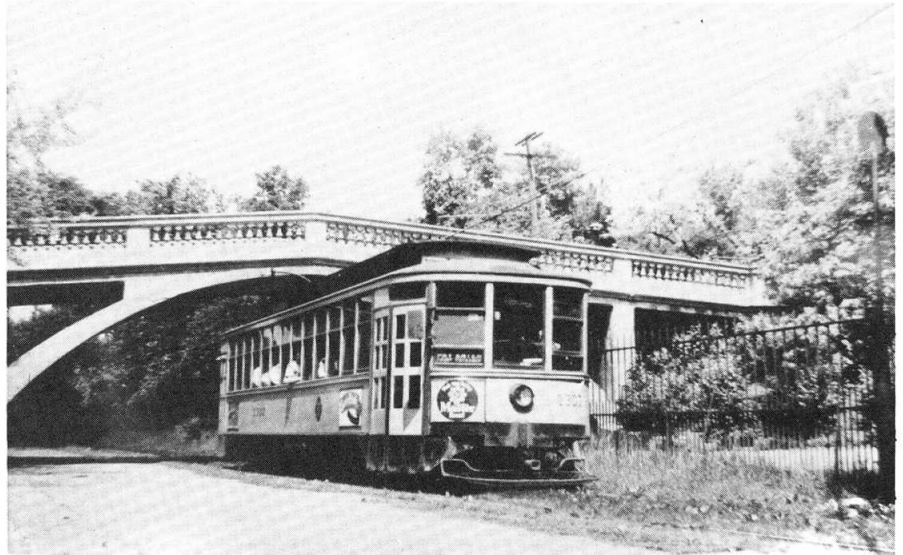
It will be thirty years ago this June that Thomas Lowry's grand, creaky, trusty, old, glorious, noisy, wonderful yellow streetcars screeched to a halt in the Twin Cities after 82 years of faithful service.

Started in 1872 in both Minneapolis and St. Paul with horsecars, the streetcar systems shaped the communities forever and grew into one of the finest systems in the land. The end came quickly in the early 1950s when new management of the Twin City Rapid Transit Company decided to scrap the rail system.

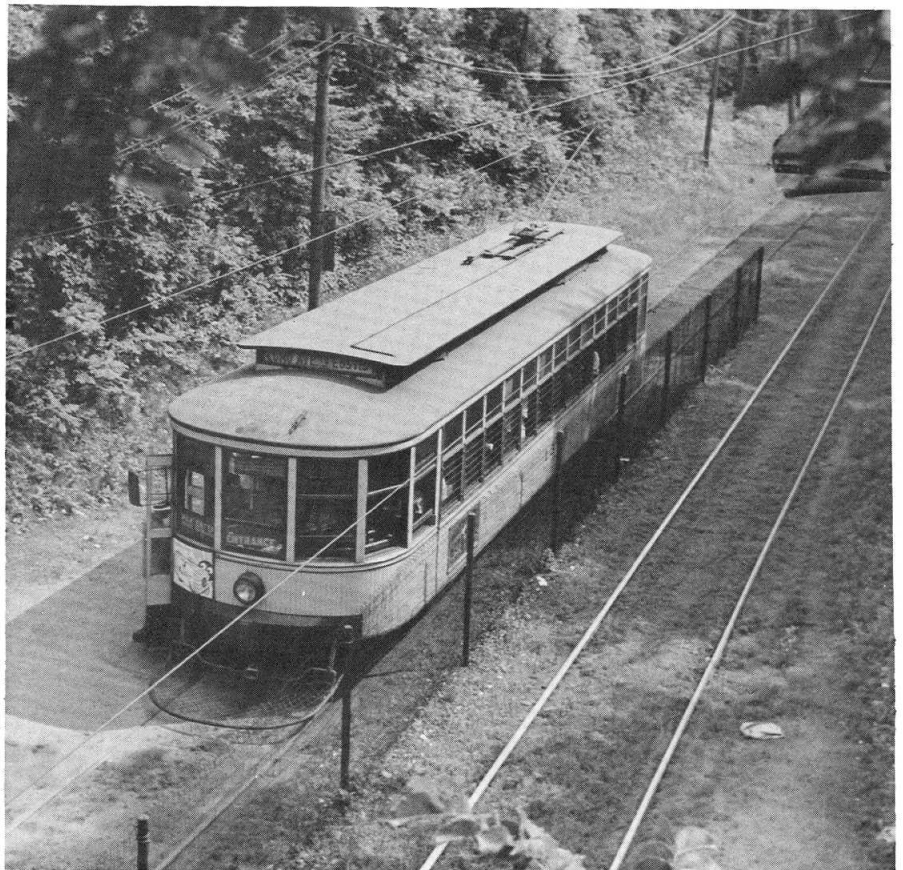
At first, the system was scheduled to be converted to buses by 1958 when the last streetcar pulled into the barn. Due to several factors, internal and external to TCRT, the conversion schedule was accelerated to be completed in mid-1954.

TCRT proudly proclaimed in 1952 that it would convert the entire system in just 25 months. And it did. Conversion came so quickly that railfans barely had warning to ride the last cars of their streetcar lines.

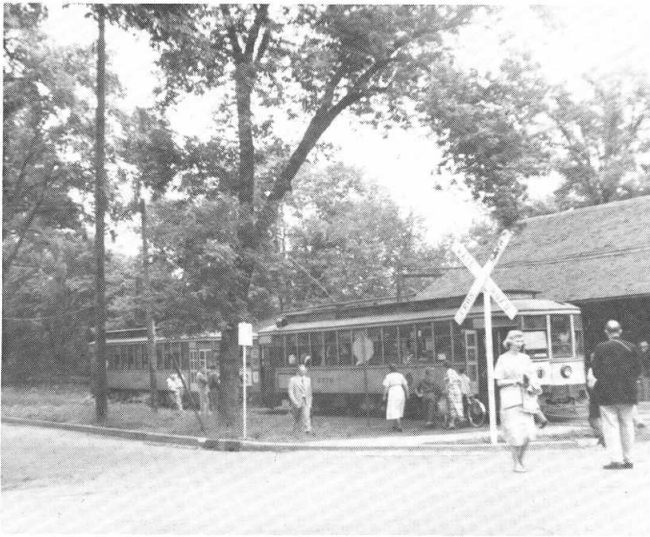
Lines were abandoned in such haste that there weren't enough of the new GM buses on hand yet to fill the new schedules. People on some lines found their smooth, quiet PCC cars replaced overnight by old, rough-riding, steel-sprunged, second-hand Macks from Texas that jarred their bones bouncing along the old cobble-stone streets.



Eastbound Como-Harriet car 1307 passed under the Lexington Pkwy. bridge on the Como Park right-of-way in St. Paul in the early 1950s. Photo by Gene Corbey.



A northbound Como-Harriet streetcar, either 1309 or 1319, bearing the sign, "Como Ave. to Eustis," stopped to pick up a passenger at the 39th-40th ("Cottage City") stop on the Lake Harriet right-of-way in July 1953. This view is from the William Berry Rd. bridge. Note the fence between tracks at this point to keep passengers from being "blind-sided" by streetcars traveling in the opposite direction. This portion of the right-of-way is in use today by MTM's restored Como-Harriet Streetcar Line, but only as a single track. Photo by C. R. Scholes.



Cars 1775, foreground, and 1300 stopped at Lake Harriet Station at 42nd and Queen Av. S. for a lunch break during the MRA last trip special on June 19, 1954.



Cars 1775 and 1300 on the Brookside loop in Edina at the end of the Como-Harriet line on June 19, 1954. Photos by Fred Rhodes.



Ray Bensen Sr.
(back row)

Wayne Olsen
(back row)

Bob MacNie
(second row)

Fred Rhodes
(third row)

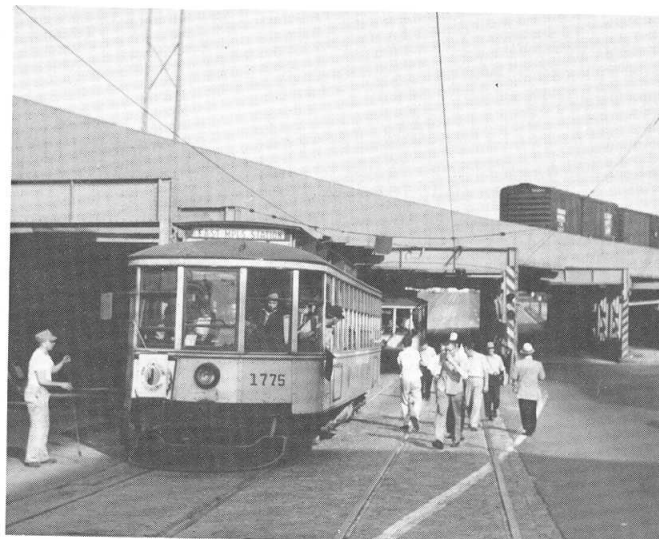
Rey Ander
(back row)
Jim Bertrand
(front row)

Corbin
(back row)
Joe Shannon
(back row)

The last ride. At least 19 current MTM members (18 of whom are identified above) are known to have been among the more than 100 railfans who rode streetcars 1775, left, and 1300 into history 30 years ago on the Minnesota Railfans Association "Au Revoir" all-day charter trip over the Como-Harriet, Oak-Harriet and Inter Campus Special lines plus runs over University and



Car 1300 made a photo stop under the Washington Av. viaduct (which was torn down this past January), left, during the MRA last trip special on June 19, 1954. Cars 1775 and 1300 posed for more pictures, right, as they emerged from



under the viaduct. The cars neared the end of the all-day fantrip as they headed towards East Mpls. Station a few blocks away. Photos by Jim Kreuzberger.



Erbin Kidder (back row) Bill Olsen (back row) Norm Podas (back row) Gene Corbey (third row) John Hemak (back row) Fred Hauser (back row) Herb Bodlund (back row)
 Bob Schumacher (back row, partially hidden) Grace Kleinegger (second row) Clark Johnson (next to back row) Bill Cordes (in window) Not pictured: Jim Kreuzberger

Washington Avs. on June 19, 1954. This picture was taken on the Brookside loop at the west end of the Como-Harriet streetcar line. Bensen, Bill Olsen and Schumacher are credited with saving car 1300 from the scrapper's torch so that it could continue to give pleasure to thousands of riders today. Photo by Art Kromer.

Understandably, these people could not comprehend this sudden "progress" in mass transit. Thirty years later, they still don't.

The **Minnesota Railfans Association** quickly arranged to organize a couple of final railfan trips in 1954 before the electricity was turned off for good.

The group chartered car 1269, the last gate car to operate in the Twin Cities, for a trip on the **GLENWOOD-4th AVENUE** line in Minneapolis, the day after the abandonment of the line on March 6, 1954. The 4th Avenue line was Minneapolis' first electric car line in 1889.

Car 1269, which was also used on a MRA railfan trip after the abandonment of the **SELBY-LAKE** line in July 1953, was scheduled to be saved by the association but, somehow, was not. It joined the other two remaining gate cars, 1266 and 1270, on a siding at Snelling Station and was scrapped. These cars, along with car 1267, which was donated to the Seashore Trolley Museum in Kennebunkport, Maine, and car 1268, which was donated to Sacred Heart School in Robbinsdale and later vandalized and scrapped, had finished their lives months before on the University of Minnesota's Inter-

campus line. Gate car 1271, which also ran on the **INTER CAMPUS SPECIAL** line with the others had been scrapped in 1953.

There were just three streetcar lines running during the three months preceding the final abandonments. All of them basically shared one streetcar line. The **COMO-HARRIET** line was the base line of the three and ran on Como Av. from Eustis St. in St. Paul near the Minneapolis city limits to Brookside Av. in Edina.

The **OAK-HARRIET** line ran from Oak and Beacon Sts. near the U of M, joined the **COMO-HARRIET** line at 4th St. and 15th Av. SE. and left it at the right-of-way at 44th and Xerxes Av. S. where it continued south on Xerxes and east on W. 50th St. to Penn Av. S.

The **INTER CAMPUS SPECIAL** line ran from the loop next to Folwell Hall near 15th and University Avs. SE., joined the **COMO-HARRIET** line at 4th St. and 15th Av. SE. and left it at Como and Eustis to proceed to the U of M's farm campus in St. Paul on a single-track private right-of-way.

When it was announced that the three remaining streetcar lines would be converted to bus operation at the close of the day on June 18, 1954, the

MRA glumly made plans for its last street railway fan trip. But first, many members and railfans made plans to ride the final runs of the steel-wheeled vehicles in regular service.

In the final weeks and days preceding final abandonment, Twin Citians rode the streetcars more than ever—while they could.

People went out of their way to transfer from their newly-converted bus lines to streetcar lines still operating to complete their trips downtown. Parents took their children on streetcar rides, not only as a reminder of their own earlier days, but to give their children a ride to remember always. For most children, it was their first—and last—streetcar ride on city streets.

Finally, all too quickly, "Black Friday," June 18, arrived. The media had publicized the streetcars' final day well in advance, even to announcing the final trips on the various lines. Although using the word "progress" in the description of the rapid abandonment of one of the nation's finest street railway systems, one could sense the sadness of the occasion in the reporting. Those who experienced that day won't forget it.



The Como-Harriet line was one of several lines that ran on busy Hennepin Av. in 1951. Car 1846 was heading east near 1st St. on its way to "East Mpls. Station" and was followed by "Oak-Harriet" car 1325. Photo by Frank E. Butts.



Westbound Como-Harriet PCC car 437 neared the France Av. loop on its private right-of-way in July 1953. Photo by C. R. Scholes.

Several MRA members and acquaintances met at the Great Northern Depot in downtown Minneapolis on the evening of the 18th to watch the rows of wooden cars, badly in need of paint and repair they would never get, roll by for the last time. Among some of TCRT's final streetcar passengers were **Jim Bertrand**, **Dave Mewhinney** and **Fred Rhodes**. They spent the evening riding the **COMO-HARRIET** and **OAK-HARRIET** streetcar lines. (Since the **INTER CAMPUS SPECIAL** did not run on evenings or weekends, its last run had occurred earlier that afternoon.)

Bertrand recalls that about a week before abandonment, he rode a **COMO-HARRIET** car one night along the



Oak-Harriet car 1324, southbound on the Lake Harriet double-track right-of-way, about to pass under the Linden Hills Blvd. bridge in the early 1950s. This site is the home of

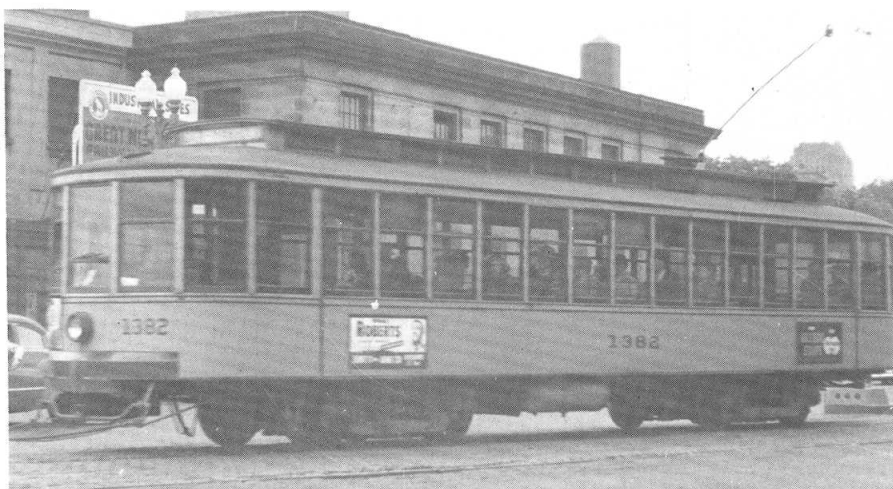
today's MTM Como-Harriet Streetcar Line carbarns. Photo from the Bill Olsen collection.

right-of-way. As the motorman raced south past Lakewood Cemetery, he was surprised to see a woman passenger waiting in total darkness at the 39th-40th St. ("Cottage City") stop at William Berry bridge. He practically stood the old car on its nose as he tried to stop the "fast" car, and even had to back up to pick her up. She mumbled something like, "Whatthehelzyur hurry?"

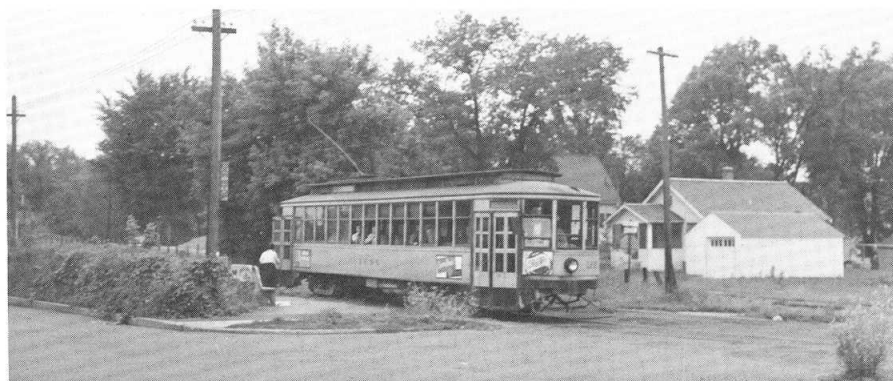
At around midnight, we climbed aboard what was said to be the last scheduled streetcar in service ever for TCRT, steel-sided car No. 1166. It was appropriate that 1166 was chosen to be the last car as it had been the oldest car in service for the past decade. A good crowd, mostly railfans, was aboard.

We chatted with the motorman as he sailed out Hennepin to 31st, to Irving, then through the blackness of the right-of-way along Lakes Calhoun and Harriet and to the end of the line at Brookside Av. One passenger in his early 20's, apparently unaware of this historic ride, fell asleep on the outbound trip. The motorman, thinking he was a railfan, didn't wake him up.

All too soon, the car made its final loop at Brookside and headed back downtown. We passed the Great Northern Depot and turned into East Mpls. Station at 1st and University Aves. NE. at 1:34 a.m. It was over. No more streetcars would be pulling in. Just out—to make the death march to Snelling Shops and the scrap heap. The young man woke up and was upset at being at the station. He was probably more upset when he saw what he'd have to ride home.



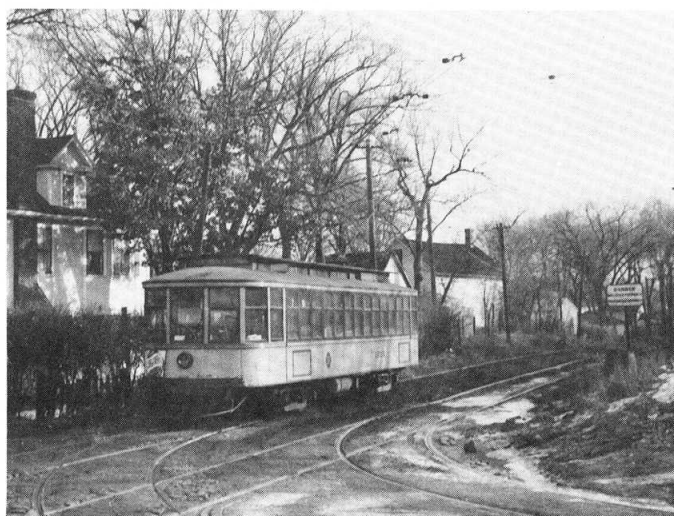
Oak-Harriet car 1382 northbound on Hennepin Av. as seen from Great Northern Depot on June 18, 1954, the last day of streetcar service in the Twin Cities. Photo by Fred Rhodes.



Como-Harriet car 1295 eastbound on the private right-of-way parallel with W. 44th St. at about Beard Av. S., heading for Lake Harriet in July 1953. Photo by C. R. Scholes.

We did not linger at the station, however. We would be back later that morning to take one more streetcar trip—aboard two cars chartered by the

Minnesota Railfans Association—for the *final* trip over all the abandoned lines.



Oak-Harriet car 1219, left, westbound on the right-of-way at Xerxes, about to turn off the right-of-way onto Xerxes. Como-



Harriet car 1645, right, continued past Xerxes on the right-of-way towards France Av. Photos by Russell Olson.

The Last Streetcar Ride

When the last regularly-scheduled streetcar ever to operate in the Twin Cities pulled into East Side (Mpls.) Station at 1:34 a.m. on June 19, 1954, it brought to an end an era that will never be seen here again. However, before the electricity was shut off, the overhead wires cut down and the tracks paved over, the Minnesota Railfans Association made one last railfan trip over all remaining electrified trackage later that same day.

Clark Johnson, president of the MRA and current MTM member, arranged the 2-car all-day trip directly with Fred Ossanna, enemy of railfans everywhere but also president of Twin City Rapid Transit Co. Wood-sided streetcar 1300 and steel-sided car 1775 were selected as the vehicles to shine the tracks for the last time.

The grand tour started and finished at East Side Station and ran from 10 a.m. until 5 p.m. The fare was a nominal \$2 (\$1 for children) which included a box lunch at Lake Harriet Station.

The trip included runs over the just-abandoned COMO-HARRIET, OAK-HARRIET and INTER CAMPUS SPECIAL streetcar lines and runs on Washington and University Aves., streets kept electrified for shop trips to Snelling Shops in St. Paul.

The cars made numerous photo stops; in front of East Side Station, on



Cars 1775 and 1300 prepared to leave East Mpls. Station on the morning of June 19, 1954 for the Minnesota Railfans Association "last trip" special. Note the "For Sale or Rent" sign. The building was sold to Superior Plating, Inc. Photo by Fred Rhodes.

the 36th St. bridge, under the Washington Av. viaduct, at Lake Harriet Station, on the Brookside loop, on both loops of the INTER CAMPUS SPECIAL line, under the foot bridges that cross over Washington Av. at the U of M and at Snelling Shops.

When the cars entered Snelling Shops and meandered around over seldom-used trackage filled with dirt, car 1775's rear truck derailed. Everybody got off both cars to watch the rerail process.

The rerailing didn't go smoothly so many members went on a scavenger hunt in the yards and began stripping destination signs, bells, etc. off of the streetcars standing in long lines waiting to be scrapped. Too bad they didn't rip off a couple of complete streetcars.

Jim Bertrand and another young member came across wire car No. 72, placed the trolley wheel on the wire, fired up the air compressor and took off on their own joyride around the yards. Fellow member and TCRT employee Bill Olsen spotted the renegade rail car, stopped it and gave the teenagers a scolding. After 1775 got off the ground, the tour left Snelling Shops much to the relief of TCRT.

Nobody recalls the box lunch at Lake Harriet Station as being anything to write home about but it did seem strange to let the two cars sit on the mainline for an hour without worry of blocking streetcar traffic. Stranger still was riding around all day and not passing another streetcar.

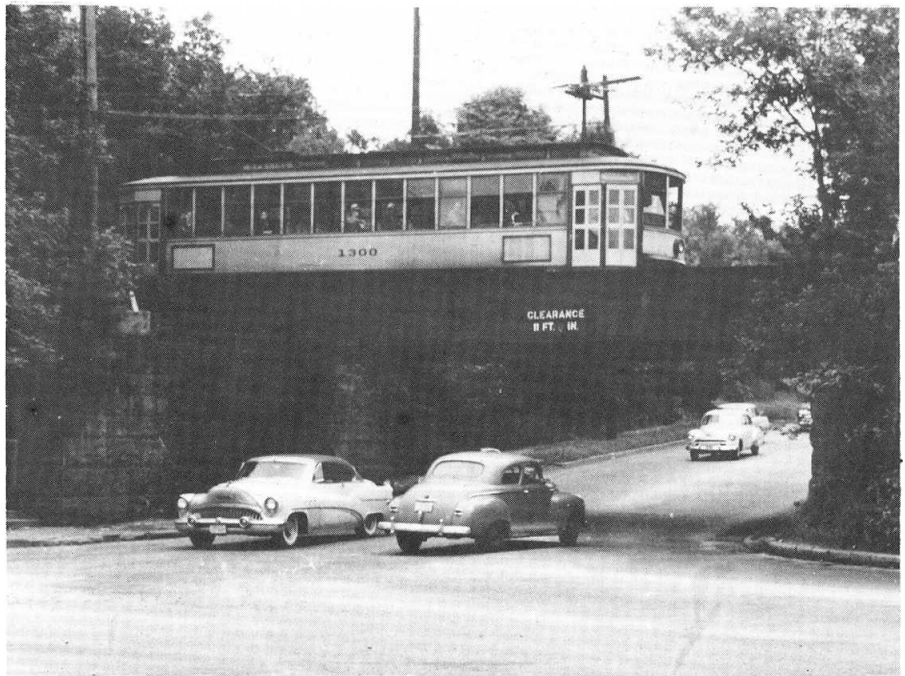


MRA members watched while the motorman tried to rerail car 1775, which had derailed while running on some old track in the Snelling Shops yard, during the last trip special on June 19, 1954. It wouldn't have surprised anyone in the group if TCRT had abandoned the car right there and taken the group back to East Side Station on another car. Photo by Jim Kreuzberger.

After several photo stops along the Lake Harriet right-of-way, the cars made a second and final run over the line, this time a no-stop high-speed trip.

At 5 p.m., the group was returned to East Side Station. The trip was over. Everything was all over. Nobody knew then if a streetcar would ever run in the Twin Cities again. Even though the MRA had suggested then that the Lake Harriet right-of-way be left intact along with one car (see newspaper article elsewhere in this issue), nobody was sure that it would actually happen. There were no plans as yet for a museum streetcar line.

As it turned out, it was nine years until a streetcar did run again—in 1963 when car 1300 carried passengers in the yards of the Minnesota Transfer Railway in St. Paul. Then it was eight *more* years until car 1300 ran again—this time permanently on the restored Lake Harriet right-of-way—in 1971.



Car 1300 made a photo stop on the 36th St. bridge by Lake Calhoun during the Minnesota Railfans Association "Au Revoir" charter special on June 19, 1954, following abandonment of the entire system. Photo by Bill Olsen.



MRA members, turned scavengers, swarmed over TCRT's remaining streetcars and stripped destination signs, bells, brackets and you-name-it from the cars on death row when the railfan last trip special stopped at Snelling Shops on June

19, 1954. Nobody is sure that the \$2 ride ticket included stripping rights but then nobody asked questions either. Photo by Jim Kreuzberger.

MRA's Last Streetcar Railfan Trip

I arranged the Minnesota Railfans Association (MRA) all-day tour of the remaining electrified trackage of the Twin City Rapid Transit system of June 19, 1954. I remember vividly going into TCRT President Fred A. Ossanna's office on the second floor of the TCRT building at 11th and Hennepin to arrange the trip and try to save a couple of streetcars that were piled high at the Snelling Shops.

At any rate, the trip covered all of the then operating TCRT lines and a number of sections of track that were still operational. Most of the switches, at one time electrically operated by the motorman, had to be thrown by hand; many of the flangeways were filled with sand and dirt making switch throwing a slow procedure!

TCRT gave us the run of the city since there were no other cars in operation on that day; service having been terminated at midnight on the night before. We covered all live trackage twice and I must say that was a memorial trip. We even had a derailment!

Incidentally, I was President of the MRA at the time of the acquisition from the Northern Pacific Railroad of steam engine 328 and its installation and dedication in the park in Stillwater.

Clark E. Johnson
Edina, Minnesota

Como-Harriet "Did the Job"

I was pleased to see my photos of the Minnesota Transfer Railway engines in the November/December 1983 *Minne gazette*. I have enclosed three more photos of steam engines in hopes that someone can answer a question about them.

I am looking forward to the Como-Harriet story, as this was the main line I rode from St. Anthony Park both ways. I wish I had something to add on that line, as I rode it for years. But it was just the way to get anywhere, and it did the job.

Gordon Bassett
Colorado Springs, Colorado

Ed. Note: The photos will appear in a future issue of the Minne gazette.

TROLLEY AU REVOIR

Traversing

ALL REMAINING STREETCAR LINES OPERATED BY

Minneapolis Railway Co.
St. Paul Railway Co.

Sponsored by Minnesota Railfans' Assn.

Saturday
JUNE 19, 1954

From East Mpls. Sta. { Leave 10 A.M.
Return 5 P.M.

OAK HARRIET - BROOKSIDE
UNIVERSITY INTERCAMPUS

FIRST AVENUE NORTH

ACCESS LINE to SNELLING SHOPS, ST. PAUL
Via WASHINGTON & UNIVERSITY AVES.

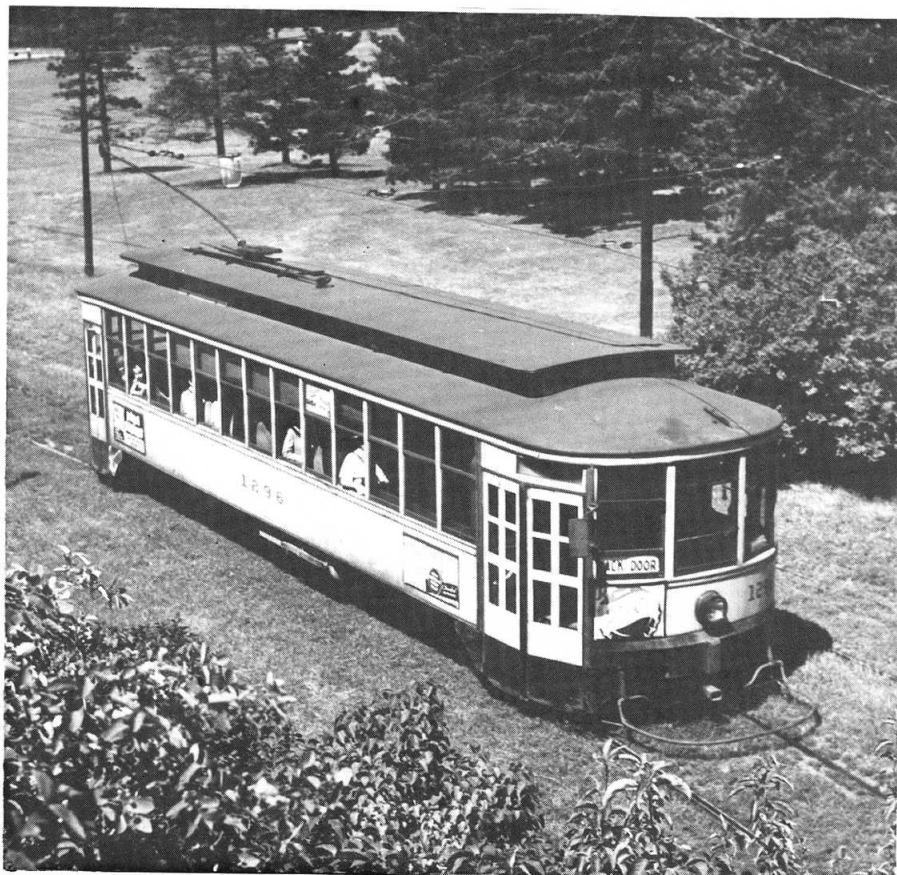
Last regular passenger service Midnight, June 18th

Lake Harriet
Lunch Stop

44

Adults - \$ 2.00
Children - \$ 1.00

Can you imagine riding all over TCRT's remaining electrified trackage for seven hours for only \$2? About 100 railfans did just that aboard cars 1300 and 1775 on June 19, 1954 using this commemorative ticket. The price included a box lunch at Lake Harriet Station. Ticket #44 from the Fred Rhodes collection.



Como-Harriet car 1296 eastbound in Como Park in St. Paul about to pass under the Lexington Pkwy bridge on July 11, 1953, the last day of streetcar operation on the St. Paul portion of the Como-Harriet streetcar line. Photo by Emil Skok.

'Black Friday' — June 18, 1954

I still remember that day—Friday, June 18, 1954. I was a boy of 12 and living in northeast Minneapolis. The Minneapolis Star had announced earlier that June 18 would be the last day of regular streetcar operations in Minneapolis.

I had already taken a last ride on the **GRAND-MONROE** and **NICOLLET - 2nd ST. N.E.** lines the previous winter, and I remember being determined to take one last, all-day ride on the **COMO-HARRIET** line. Fortunately, the last day of school that year fell on June 17, so I carefully saved up six dimes to cover two rides on that day.

Friday morning began cloudy and overcast as I recall—appropriate weather for "Black Friday." After a quick breakfast, I walked to the corner store at 37th and Central Aves. NE. and bought a five-cent scratch pad and pencil to write notes on my ride (I still have the notepad).

I then boarded a southbound **BLOOMINGTON-COL. HTS.** bus (like MTM's 1399) and rode south on Central to 4th St. SE. and transferred to **OAK-HARRIET** streetcar No. 1298 by the old Sears department store. I recall sitting up front on the right hand side facing rattan bench seat to get the best view.

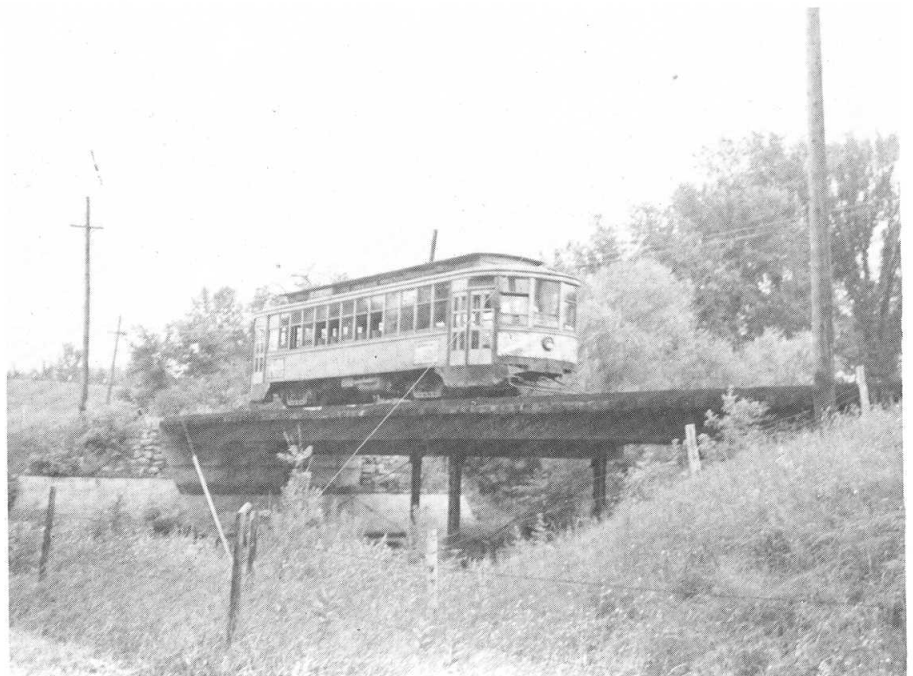
We turned south on E. Hennepin Av., one block from the East Side car barn and past Woolworth's and Kresge's dime stores and other buildings familiar to me in my growing years. We then crossed over to Nicollet Island and past the old Salvation Army used furniture and book stores where I used to buy comic books at two for five cents. My dad, who worked for the Minneapolis Police Dept., bought my first used bicycle at a shop across the avenue near DeLaSalle High School.

We then proceeded across the Hennepin Av. bridge, over the Mississippi River to the streetcar safety island across from the old Great Northern train depot and into downtown Minneapolis on Hennepin Av. with its many businesses, theatres and people. I recall many of the passengers conversing with the motorman about this last day. One of the older motormen I rode with later that day had said he was "going to retire along with the streetcar" that month.

Proceeding through the downtown area, the tracks turned gently left and



A northbound Como-Harriet streetcar passed under the Linden Hills Blvd. bridge near Lake Harriet in southwest Minneapolis in August 1948. Tucked under this bridge today is the original MTM car barn, built in 1970-71. The newer car barn sits where the streetcar is in this picture. Photo by R. Donald Ross.



Westbound Como-Harriet car 1311 crossed the bridge over Minnehaha Creek in Edina on its private right-of-way as it neared the end of the line at the Brookside loop in July 1953. Photo by C. R. Scholes.

down a small incline and then past Loring Park on the left. I remember feeling a sense of awe at the symmetry and complexity of the streetcar tracks, poles and overhead wires. We next proceeded uphill and intersected with the old "Lyndale Bottleneck" with its heavy traffic. I can't recall the run down to Lake St. anymore. The next thing I do remember was coming off 31st into an alleyway and thinking how strange a place for a streetcar to run with garages, backyards and fences on both sides.

Whenever another streetcar would come from the opposite side, I would jot down its number in my scratch pad and then watch through the windows as it passed. You kind of got a sensation like both cars standing still for a moment when both cars were directly opposite each other.

The rain was beginning to come down hard as we skirted the east side of Lake Calhoun because it was hard to see the lake. We crossed a small trestle to a cemetery (Lakewood) on the left and onto the present MTM line. I can remember the brick William Berry bridge, the long wrought-iron fencing separating the two tracks, and the rock terrace by the present MTM car barn, with Lake Harriet on the left.

At Xerxes Av. S., we turned left to complete the **OAK-HARRIET** run to W. 50th St. At the end of the line, I recall dashing under an awning of a beauty parlor to escape the rain. My return trip on the next car retraced the route to the **OAK-HARRIET** terminus at Beacon St. by the University of Minnesota (where I would later attend for five years and obtain an engineering degree). I then took car No. 1319 back to Central Av. and home by bus for lunch.

In the afternoon, as I prepared to leave home for my last ride, my friend next door stopped over and wanted to do something. I can recall declining since I knew this was the last chance to ride the streetcars and I didn't want to miss it. I next remember boarding **COMO-HARRIET** car No. 1220 at 4th St. SE. again heading south. I retraced my tracks (no pun intended) to Xerxes Av. S. where the Como line crossed the street and proceeded down the right-of-way which seemed to cut right through several blocks with homes on either side.

The car had to stop several times as it crossed each street until it reached the end of the line at the loop at France Av. I got off and sat on a bench and



Como-Harriet car 1316 loaded passengers at 7th and Wabasha after making the loop in downtown St. Paul in July 1953 before heading back to Minneapolis. Photo by Emil Skok.



A TCRT streetcar bearing a "Loop" sign northbound on the Lake Harriet right-of-way about to pass under the Linden Hills bridge. The stairway still exists, but a wayward Cadillac took the steps down a couple of years ago and much of the railing with it. Photo by Gene Corbey.

watched as several cars went up and down the right-of-way and made the sharp, wheel-screaching loop with the cowcatcher hanging way out over the track. I remember one man near me taking pictures of the streetcars and asking one motorman to pose in front of his car for a shot. I wish I had a copy of that picture now.

As it was getting later in the afternoon, I boarded the next car (No. 1546) and rode the length of the **COMO-HARRIET** line for the last time to the end of the line at Como Av. and Eustis St. By that time it was starting to get dark, and I remember crossing Como Av. and watching the streetcars come and go into the siding.

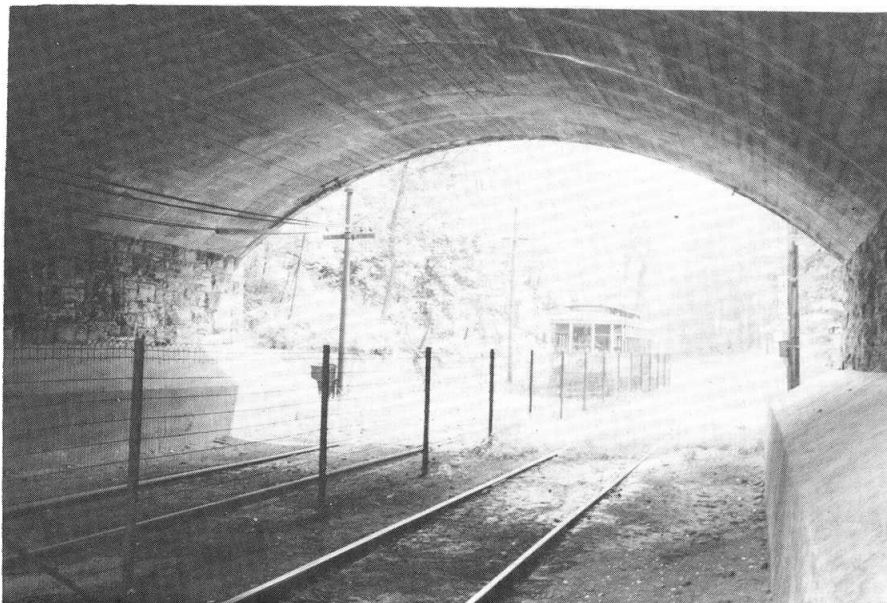
One motorman had a problem with his trolley pole which slipped off the wire sending a shower of sparks into the twilight skies. This happened a couple more times before he was able to successfully reset it. I remember thinking it was like the final death throes of the streetcars. I crossed back over to the streetcar shelter and heard one man say to the motorman, "You won't have to worry about that problem anymore after today."

Shortly thereafter, and with great reluctance, I boarded car No. 1625 for the last, brief run back to Central Av. As we approached Central Av., I rang the bell, walked to the front, and held onto the pole by the front exit. When the streetcar stopped and the door opened, I recall standing there for just a moment, not wanting to leave. I felt this would be the last time I would ever ride a streetcar again and I didn't want to leave.

Now, some 30 years later, I appreciate the efforts of MTM over the years to preserve a remnant of those streetcars which were so much a part of my childhood years in Minneapolis. I am grateful that I can still ride the rails when I periodically get back to Minneapolis. Thank you again for your efforts.

By the way, according to the notes that I made on that long-ago day, among the streetcars that I saw operate on that last, regular day of operations were as follows: 1216, 1219, 1220, 1294, 1297, 1298, 1300, 1301, 1302, 1304, 1306, 1307, 1311, 1313, 1319, 1320, 1322, 1323, 1324, 1327, 1382, 1545, 1546, 1559, 1625, 1642, 1665, 1671, 1682, 1694, 1756, 1767, 1775, 1784, 1788, 1789, 1795, 1797, 1807, 1817, 1820, 1827, 1845, 1846, 1848, 1849 and 1854.

Gerald W. Robertson
Renton, Washington



A northbound Como-Harriet car was about to pass under the William Berry bridge in July 1953. This underpass is part of today's museum streetcar line route. It is the point under which the motorman usually blasts the car's air whistle which brings gasps, oohs and aahs from the riders. Photo by C. R. Scholes.



Como-Harriet streetcar No. 1300 on the wye at Como & Eustis in St. Paul near the Minneapolis city limits on September 11, 1953. After the abandonment of the St. Paul portion of the Como-Harriet line on July 11, 1953, Minneapolis Como-Harriet cars turned around at this point. Fortunately for thousands of Minnesotans, streetcar 1300 and a portion of the Como-Harriet line exists today to rekindle some of the glory and memories of this great interurban line. Photo from the MTM files.

A Wayward Como-Harriet Run

Being a part-time conductor working out of Snelling Station while going to the U of M, I didn't have occasion to become involved with the **COMO-HARRIET** runs except for the **FAIR GROUNDS** cars. The one exception was a ride on a **COMO-HARRIET** fill-in car to the far northeast side of St. Paul.

On a winter rush hour evening of 1947-48, I was stationed as a street fare collector on the corner of 7th and Wabasha in downtown St. Paul. For some reason, there had been over a half-hour interruption in eastbound service on the **ST. CLAIR-PAYNE** line.

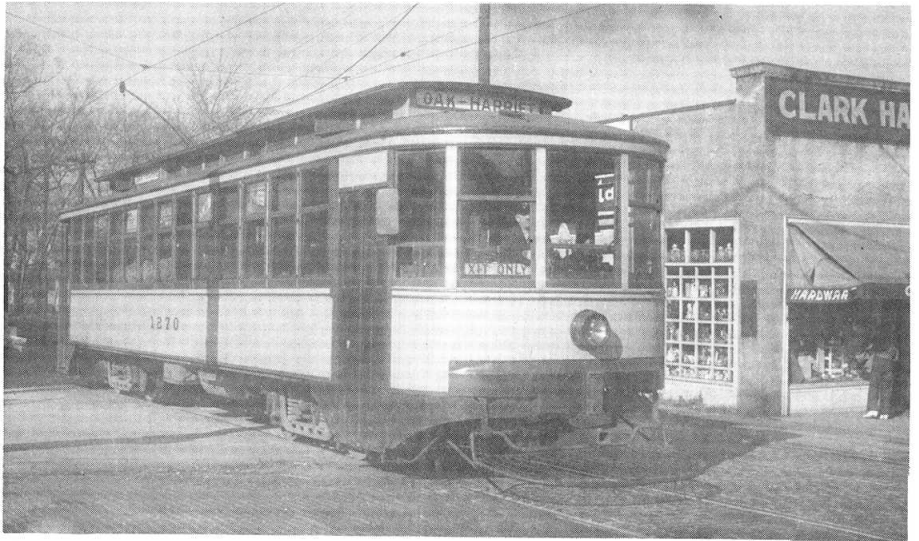
The waiting riders were becoming quite restless, for they were used to service of less than 10 minutes headway during the rush hour. As the delay lengthened, they sent their delegates across the street with increasing frequency to complain to the Starter ("Inspector") and to demand that he do something about it.

At first, the Starter confined his efforts to looking for pull-in cars of the **MINNEAPOLIS-ST. PAUL** Interurban line, and he asked the trainmen of several such cars if they would run a fill-in on the Payne Av. line. Each time the crew refused when asked. Post-war crews were *asked*; pre-war crews were *told*.

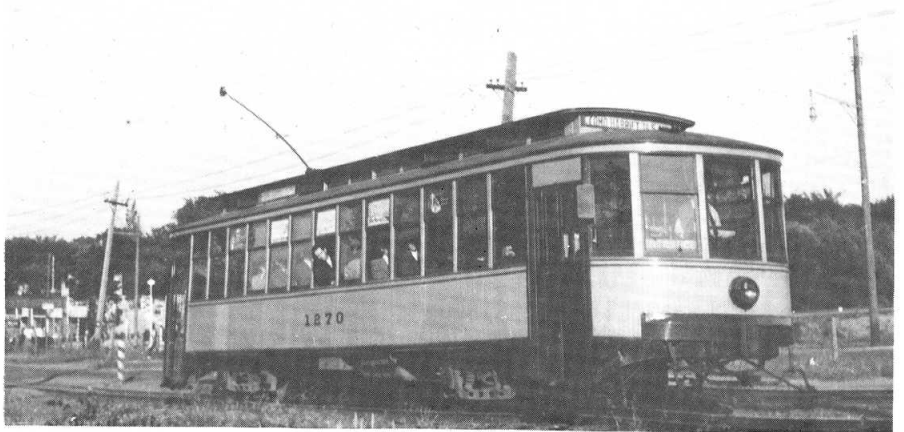
As the complaints from riders became more frequent and more vocal, the Starter began making the same request of the crews of regular Interurban cars, and again he received refusals. That was real desperation—to even think of pulling an Interurban car from a scheduled run!

Finally, a **COMO-HARRIET** gate car came along with its pull-in **EAST MPLS. STATION** destination sign, and the same request was made to the trainmen. Both motorman and conductor responded that they wouldn't mind at all except that they didn't know anything about St. Paul routes. I was asked if I would go along to show the motorman the route, and I said OK.

And so, the errant travel of the East Minneapolis gate car began. The front destination sign was rolled to blank. As soon as I called out "Payne Avenue," the cold passengers swarmed across the street to the car so that we had standees before we swung eastward onto 7th St. from Wabasha. At each downtown corner, I stepped down from the front steps and announced



Oak-Harriet gate car 1270 eastbound on the Lake Harriet right-of-way where it crosses Upton Av. S. between 43rd and 44th Sts. in about 1940. Clark Hardware is now Bayer's Hardware. This portion of the right-of-way is still intact and used as an alley. Photo from the Russell Olson collection.



Gate car 1270, bearing "Como-Harriet to 54th," on the right-of-way near 44th and France in the 1940s. Photo by Gene Corbey.



Como-Harriet gate car 1271 northbound on Hennepin Av. just north of Lake St. in 1940. Photo from the Gene Corbey collection.

the destination. We probably set some record for a passenger count since I was squeezing them in through the front door while the conductor was doing the same through the rear gates.

I pointed out the route and described anticipated conditions to the motorman, and I called out the street names to the passengers. The riders seemed to be more jovial than annoyed, partly because they were grateful to get any form of transportation and, partly because riding on a gate car was a special event on the Payne Av. line.

The Minneapolis crew seemed to be enjoying themselves, too. When we arrived at Maryland and Duluth Aves., the motorman wanted to run through the signal block and go up the single track to Kennard just for the sight-seeing, but I talked him out of that. After we backed into the Duluth wye and rolled the destination back to EAST MPLS. STATION, I wondered if a car from that station had ever been so far away from home before.

The trip back to downtown St. Paul was rather uneventful. For the quiz-zical expressions that we noted on the few passengers who boarded, we merely explained that this was a "LOOP" car. I have forgotten the names of the trainmen, but I remember that they explained that they were both from the extra board and were just glad to get the extra hours.

I directed them onto the Cedar Loop track and I left the car at 9th and Wabasha. I checked back in at 7th and Wabasha having gained a couple of extra hours for myself.

Earl Anderson
Milwaukee, Wisconsin



Como-Harriet car 1216 passed the quanset huts on Como Av. SE. in Minneapolis built right after World War II for returning GI's. Note the marker brackets still on the front of the car which dates back to earlier days. Photo by Frank E. Butts.



The Lake Harriet Station and platform canopy shortly after abandonment in 1954. The tracks had already been taken up. Photo from the MTM files.



Como-Harriet PCC car 429, bearing the sign "Como Ave. to Eustis," eastbound on Como Av. SE. in Minneapolis near the St. Paul city limits in July 1953. Photo by C. R. Scholes.



Como-Harriet car 1300 on Como Av. near Eustis St. in St. Paul in 1953. Photo from the Gene Corbey collection.

Como Av. St. Paul Locals

I was a conductor with TCRT working out of Snelling Station in the late 1940s and had a regular "pullout" on the St. Paul end of the **COMO-HARRIET** line for about two years.

As I recall, we pulled out of Snelling Station at 6:58 a.m. in an old 1400-series gate car with the signs set to **LOOP** and headed north on the **SNELLING AVE.** line to Como Av., then east on Como over the regular route of the **COMO-HARRIET** line.

When we reached 7th and Wabasha in downtown St. Paul, I changed the signs to **UNIV. TO SNELLING** and pulled into Snelling Station via University Av. by 8:04 a.m. There was no **COMO-HARRIET** reading on the destination signs of Snelling Station cars

since all regular **COMO-HARRIET** cars were stationed at East Side Station in Minneapolis.

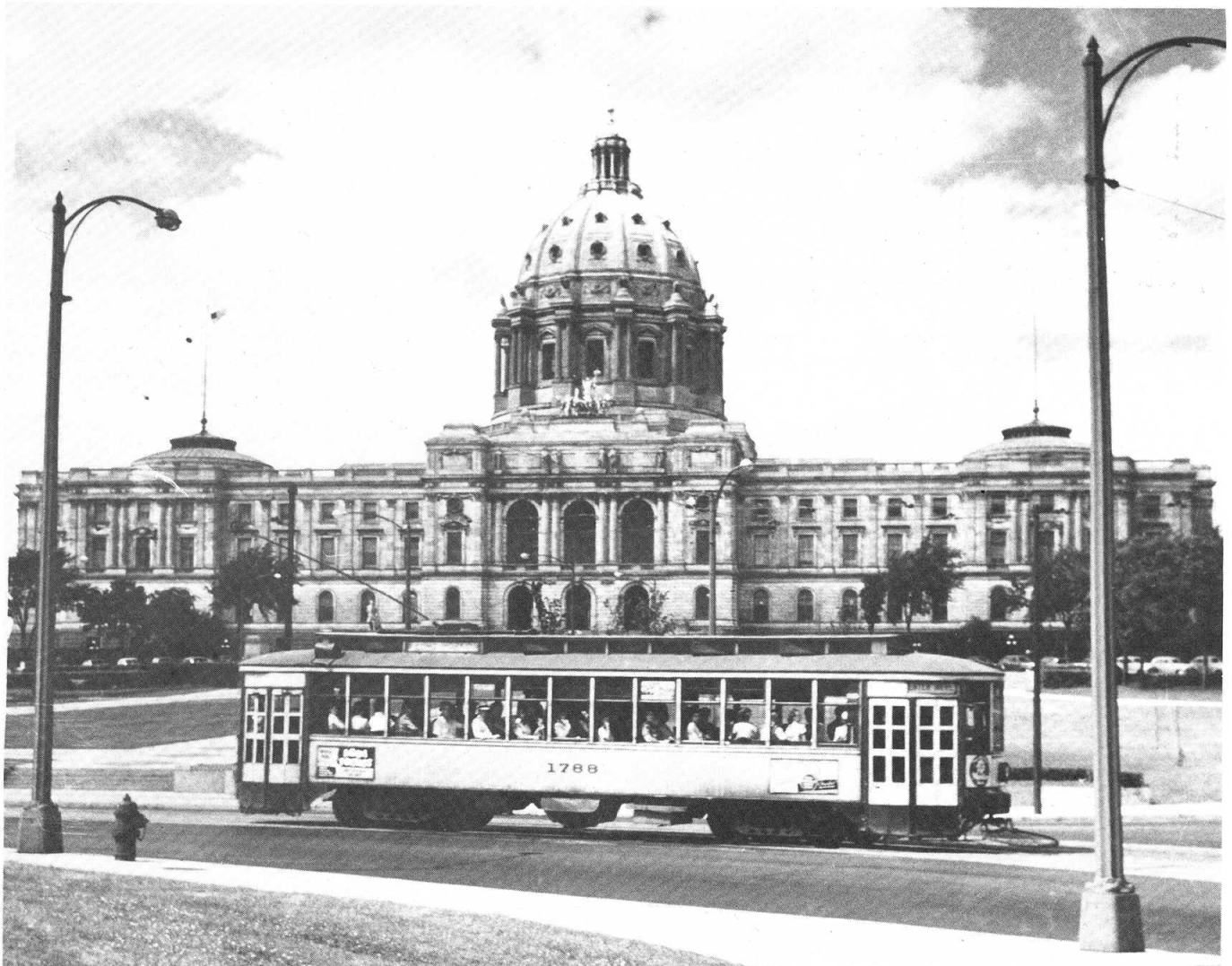
When we arrived at Como and Pascal, I saw a lot of my neighbors and friends and talked to them all the way downtown. After we went through Como Park, we went through an area where I used to go to grade school and I would see a lot of my school friends for, at that time, everyone took the streetcar and no one drove to work! After we pulled into the barn, I had to quick clean up and go to school.

I took a **SNELLING AVE.** car north to Como and transferred to a west-bound **COMO-HARRIET** car to go to the city limits to get to school.

I also had a "stub" or "pullout" on Como Av. on Monday and Thursday nights when the stores were open downtown. A "stub" or "pullout" was a short run during the rush hour lasting 2 or 3 hours.

We pulled out of Snelling Station at 7:05 p.m. and went down University Av. to Wabasha with the signs set to **LOOP**. Once downtown, I then turned the signs to blank and the motorman put a white card with black lettering in the center window that read, "Como Av. to Eustis St."

We usually had a "button car" for this run. A "button car" was like our car 1300 in that it could be operated one-man or two-man.



Fully-loaded Como-Harriet car 1788 (with the gate-side sign turned to Como-Hopkins) eastbound on Wabasha St., passed the State Capitol on July 11, 1953, the last day of streetcar

operation on the St. Paul portion of the Como-Harriet streetcar line. Photo by Emil Skok.

I always liked to work Como Av. because there was not that much traffic and customers as on the TO MINNEAPOLIS and TO ST. PAUL Interurban line which was always busy.

My cap number was 2682. In 1947, my number was changed to 3616 which, before 1940, was a Duluth Av. Station conductor badge number.

Gene Corbey
St. Paul



Home Just in Time

Enclosed are some of my shots of the "last trip." Yes, 30 years is a long time, so my memories of the occasion are dimmed a bit.

I was on military duty at Camp McCoy, Wisconsin at the time of the trip. I was able to get away from camp at an early hour, but I did not get to the Twin Cities soon enough to catch the first part of the all-day trip. It was probably during this portion of the trip that I missed the group shot taken at Brookside.

I had mixed emotions about the trip; sad, because we were losing one of the



Como-Hopkins PCC car 358 eastbound just after entering the Como Park right-of-way at Hamline Av. in St. Paul in the early 1950s. Photo by Emil Skok.

greatest street railways ever; happy, because I was among many fine friends on such a momentous and exciting occasion—and it was always good to ride those great TCRT/DSR (Duluth) cars.

As I have, on many trolley fan trips, I was impressed then, too, by the re-

markable knowledge of TCRT equipment and operations shown by those who were in charge of the trip. And we were able, it seems, to do most, if not all, of the things that the group leaders wanted to do that day.

Jim Kreuzberger
Overland Park, Kansas



Como-Harriet car 1775, in its final days in regular service, southbound on Hennepin Av. at 8th St. in downtown Minneapolis in 1954. Photo by Fred Rhodes.



A Como-Harriet streetcar sped southbound on the private right-of-way between Lakes Calhoun and Harriet as seen from the William Berry bridge in July 1953. Photo by C. R. Scholes.

A Como-Harriet Observer

I didn't live on the **COMO-HARRIET** streetcar line but I observed the last two months of its life. I lived on the **BLOOMINGTON-COL. HTS.** line in south Minneapolis, a nice quiet little streetcar line with one-man cars and some PCC's. On an extremely rare occasion, I saw a gate car on the line during the evening rush hour. Sadly for me, the line was one of the first lines to be abandoned, in February 1953.

I was on the work release program at Roosevelt High and got my first job as an usher at the lavish State Theatre (now Jesus People Church) at 8th and Hennepin in April 1954, just two months before abandonment. I was able to take the **COMO-HARRIET** or **OAK-HARRIET** car to work after school (by transferring twice). However, by boarding the car at Lake St. for the trip downtown, I missed the best part of the trip—along the Lake Harriet right-of-way. But, it was a streetcar ride.

While collecting movie tickets, I got a chance to observe the streetcar traffic through the front doors of the theatre. I soon realized that I saw the same 30 or so streetcars every day (probably the same numbers documented by member **Gerald Robertson** in his story elsewhere in this issue). It made me wonder where the other 700 or so cars were. Were they already scrapped? The gate cars and PCC's were all gone and all

remaining cars were the standard one-man cars—a mix of wood- and steel-sided cars, all in dire need of new paint or at least a washing.

It was sad to think that the once-great Thomas Lowry streetcar fleet of over 1,000 cars had been reduced to so

few so fast. But I enjoyed the scene played before me for that two-month period. After June 18, I preferred to work inside the theatre and watch the movies.

Fred Rhodes
Bloomington, Minnesota



Streetcars were still carrying some U.S. mail in 1946—in this case, from Hopkins to downtown Minneapolis. A motorman carried a mail pouch from eastbound shuttle car 1320 at the transfer point of 44th and France to a waiting Como-Harriet car for the rest of the trip downtown. The shuttle car had its destination sign turned to blank and carried a wooden board in the front window that read "To France Ave." Photo by Lowell Wood.



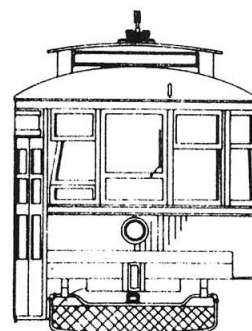
TCRT Abandonments Still Costing Money

When Twin City Rapid Transit Co. scrapped the rail system 30 years ago, it was done, the company said, to save money. Well, several fleets of buses later and with new fleets needed, we all know how much money was saved.

A report released in April by the Metropolitan Council estimated that the proposed light rail transit system from downtown St. Paul, through downtown Minneapolis, to Hopkins could cost \$153 million. We once had a street railway system that ran from St. Paul to Hopkins. It was called the **COMO-HOPKINS** streetcar line. And it was all paid for.

But with ever-increasing traffic congestion in the years ahead, the Twin Cities may have no choice but to duplicate this once viable streetcar line, regardless of cost. The alternative is more highways and more buses at even more cost.

In a similar situation, estimates have been made over the past few years for a \$17 million busway that would shuttle U of M students from the main campus in Minneapolis to the farm campus in St. Paul. Remember the **INTER CAMPUS SPECIAL** streetcar line? What was the real cost of the abandonment of the streetcar system?



Streetcars in the News — 30 Years Ago

Stories were piled high in the newspapers in June 1954 before and after the abandonment of the streetcar system. The following paragraphs are

excerpts from a story that appeared in the June 9, 1954 *Minneapolis Star*, nine days before abandonment of the system. Reprinted with permission

from the *Minneapolis Star and Tribune*.

RISE & FALL OF CITY'S TROLLEYS

Soon--Not a Streetcar in Sight

By **WALTER JOHNSON**
Minneapolis Star Staff Writer

NEXT WEEK the last of the city's streetcars—the familiar yellow trolleys reviled and blessed for 65 years—will rumble out of the city's life—but not out of its memory.

They've got the big new buses now, and trolley tracks will be visible for a while yet gathering rust. But somehow the streets will look mighty bare after June 19, the day the last streetcar makes its run.

The fallen monarchs of Minneapolis transportation were born on Christmas eve of 1889, and nursed along on one short line of trackage. In their heyday, they rolled over 523 miles of trackage in the Twin Cities area.

There are still old-timers around who witnessed the beginning of the city's trolleys.

They were youngsters in the crowd down at Third street and Second avenue S. when the sharp clang of streetcar bells joined the Yuletide chorus of 1889.

They saw eight electric cars—of peanut size compared with the latter-day giants—move out on the Fourth avenue line.

Drivers and conductors stood with a dignity that strained the brass buttons of their long ulster coats. Sparks shot from the wheels and the trolley wires, sending spectators scurrying in genuine or mock concern. Passengers hid traces of uneasiness by waving jauntily to the throng.

Horses reared and plunged in their buggy traces. Their owners cast dark and anxious eyes at the streetcar tracks. They had heard rumors that those newfangled "electric" tracks could kill a horse.

Among the crowd, according to one newspaper account of the day, was an Irish immigrant who appeared to be of stereotype character. He thrust his hands deep into his pockets and philosophized, as the faded clipping from the day records:

"Well, yees can hang the loikes of me! Oive heard of people talkin' through the tellmephone and writin' letters on the tellmegraph, but ridin' on electricity is too much!"

The people who took the first ride on the electric trolley had a right to be proud. But actually, they were still riding on the "dinky car" of horse-drawn fame. The bodies of the horse-cars were converted to operate with electric motors.

Only 14 years previous to that "electrifying" Christmas eve scene, the first two horse-drawn cars had started up in Minneapolis.

They sold rides at a nickel a head, and their first day's yield showed \$21.50.

The old dinky cars also witnessed some red faces; when a customer forgot to stick his nickel in the fare box, the driver sounded a reminding bell.

The Greater Minneapolis Safety council undoubtedly would look with extreme displeasure on that old-time horse-car. In winter the floors of the car was covered with hay about a foot deep. A small sheet-iron stove provided the heat. Frequently, some of the town's most elegant citizens would alight with hay clinging to their feet.

The driver stood on an open platform protected only by an iron dash, which extended a short distance above his knees. He had little chance for leisure, for he drove the horse, watched for passengers, looked after the depositing of fares, made

change, worked 12 to 16 hours each day, gobbled his dinner in 20 minutes, and washed his car daily. For this he was paid \$35 a month.

He was under strict orders not to "speed" his horse faster than six miles per hour, and the horse, which was frequently a mule, co-operated.

In later days, prankish youngsters would be greasing the streetcar tracks at the bottom of a hill, just to watch the tram gnash its wheels. But no such disrespect for the streetcar was in evidence in the early days.

If a car went off the tracks, passengers got out to help the driver put it back on. Or they all heaved-ho to push it up a steep grade.

The first "bob-tail" cars of the horse era gave way to cars 12 to 16 feet long as the system grew. Rails had to be changed when paving of the streets was begun. But the horsecar lines, which had started out with only 2.1 miles of track, were scarcely completed when the electric trolley took over. And it was under the trolley that, by 1931, the company had 523 miles of trackage in the Twin Cities area.

Sandwiched between the horsecar and its electric successor was something that the old-timers remember well—the old "Motor Line." The Motor Line was nothing more than a steam locomotive housed over so as to keep the horses happy. Even then, they were good for two runaways a day, according to papers of the times. The Motor Line carried open and closed cars on tracks to Lake Calhoun, and eventually formed part of the Lake Minnetonka run.

Before the Nicollet avenue hill was graded down, the steam motors frequently created a

"rush hour" spectacle. The motor often couldn't make the hill, with the heavy evening load it was carrying, and the car would back down to make a fresh start.

Residents as well as horses didn't take kindly to the motors.

Things got so bad for the steam motors that they fell victim to ignominy of the rankest sort—horses were used to drag the engines between two points in the loop.

When narrow gauge locomotives were added to the Motor Line equipment, trains began running to Excelsior. During summer months the road operated from four to six trains daily to Excelsior. It took 80 minutes to get there, for \$1 round trip during the winter and 75 cents during the summer.

The Lyndale Co. which ran the Motor Line never fulfilled its plan of building a canal between Lakes Calhoun and Harriet. But old-timers remember its passenger steamer known as the "Hattie."

Since ships are "she," and "she's" are perverse, you might know that the Hattie ran on Calhoun and not Harriet. Hattie wasn't very popular, so one summer it was towed out into the lake and a crowd saw the spectacle of a "ship burning at sea."

The Motor Line developed more and more of an unpopular personality as the city grew. Experiments were made to find a substitute, such as a "soda" motor and the "Vanderpole" electric car, but were unsuccessful. The Motor Line finally headed for "Purgatory" (which indeed was a spot on the Excelsior run), in 1887.

The street railway company, taking over the tracks, at that time built the first pavilion out at Lake Harriet.

The sparks really flew, once electrification was under way. Horsecar lines were shoved to the side of the street or to a nearby street as roadbeds were prepared for the heavier rails.

Trolley poles went in the center of the streets, between the lines of double track, and the trolley wire was supported from cross arms on the center poles.

By August 1892, 23 lines were "runnin' on electricity." They were electrified just in time to get a double-whammy from an unsuspected villain—the bicycle.

The bicycle craze hit between 1893 and 1896. Bikes not only were ridden to work, but also were pedaled to the theaters by some people of fashion. And it cut heavily into the streetcar revenue.

The trolleys survived their enemy, however, and ran up new victories (the Como-Harriet interurban line, 1898; Lake street "Crosstown" in 1905; an electric line generally following the old Motor Line to Excelsior).

That Excelsior run also involved a fleet of three ferry boats and several express boats operating on Lake Minnetonka, plus a 65-acre tract on Big Island, set up as an amusement park and picnic ground.

* * *

Minneapolis streetcars had the reputation of being the biggest in the country. Some claim that was because they had to accommodate Scandinavian feet. Then again, it might have been a reaction to the "dinky" cars. At any rate, the streetcar company began turning out its own cars in 1898, and continued for 30 years.

Probably most familiar to the generations of tram riders are the big yellow tail-gate cars with spring-cane seats for 48 persons, which at one time were being turned out at the rate of 100 per year. Some will be operating right up to the June 19 demise.

While they "seated" 48, on a football day it seemed that one car alone would erupt enough people to fill Memorial stadium.

Luther Bakken, who joined the company in 1912 and now is transportation superintendent, remembers one time when he

took 155 fares on a car hauling a Sunday horde to Minnehaha Falls.

The company used to run a streetcar-every-minute service between Minnehaha Falls and Lake Harriet, with the trolleys packing crowds in for the afternoon band concerts at Minnehaha and the evening concerts at Harriet. The fight for space was so vigorous that customers often would pay an extra nickel to ride about the 'Haha loop, just to insure themselves a seat.

Toward the last, the "open" run between Lakes Calhoun and Harriet was the only place the trams could pick up much speed without hazard. It was the relic of a time when the trolleys were providing one of the first mile-a-minute thrills in the nation to patrons going out to Lake Minnetonka.

A breezy ride to 'Tonka was a favorite way for many to beat the summer heat on a week-end, before the line went out in 1932.

Today only a few road bed mounds, fast disappearing under the suburban housing boom, remain as relics of that once-flourishing trolley run.

* * *

Like weather and taxes, the streetcars provided the public with plenty of conversation. Few there are who can't recall a trial or tribulation involving a tram. (They're less apt to recall the many times the motorman would hold up a trolley and wait for a hot-footing pedestrian, or help an elderly person up or down the steps.)

Complaints date back to the horsecar days, when they included a controversy over free rides for firemen. President Tom Lowry settled that one by declaring he "would rather pay the fare of fire laddies out of my own pocket when they want a ride to a fire" than get involved in a free-ride order.

The first recorded mass complaint against public transportation in Minneapolis came on the day the Motor Line extended its service to Lake Minnetonka.

The train carried several hundred passengers to Excelsior for a boat outing, then went back to Lake Calhoun for water. But on the return trip to Excelsior, the train left the track.

A hurry-up call for a special train of the Minneapolis and St. Louis railroad brought no quick result. When tired and hungry excursionists had all but abandoned hope of getting home that night, an M. & St. L. train appeared. So did a train of the Motor Line.

In the early days of the electric trolley a paper reported that "people who patronize the 31st street car line have learned, by waiting till they got tired for a car to come along and then making inquiries, that no cars are being run along the line these days because the street is being graded."

The Tribune printed a winter schedule one year and advised travelers to paste the schedule in their hats, "as a glance will do away with the necessity of holding a below-zero confab with a crotchety car-starter every time one wants to journey."

Accidents also came in for their share of discussion. Probably unmatched for thrills was a day in the 1890s when a loaded streetcar nearly fell into the Mississippi river.

Some 25 passengers were aboard an interurban car traveling across the Washington avenue bridge. The car left the track—and when it stopped the wheels were within six inches of the edge of the bridge. The rear platform jutted out beyond the edge. Panicky passengers had raced for the exit, and without doubt some would have been hurled into the river if the conductor hadn't barred their way.

Undoubtedly, in future years Minneapolis citizens rummaging in old clothes or attics will find forgotten streetcar tokens or transfers, and pause to reflect on the "good old days."

The streetcar company had some interesting ideas concerning transfers, and protection against their improper use. Early birds among tram patrons can recall getting "punched in the face" by the conductor. Transfers at that time carried seven pictures of faces—five of men and two of women. Men's faces ranged from clean shaven to heavily bearded, while the women's were distinguished by the style of hat. The conductor punched the face most closely resembling that of the passenger.

Other transfers have carried on their backs various little bits of philosophy or jokes. Some jokes brought guffaws from passengers; others appeared of about the same vintage as Car 1166, which was built by the company in 1906 and will be one of the last to go out of service.

With even the inter-campus trolley scheduled to be replaced by bus, it appears thus far that future generations will know the old Minneapolis streetcar only by pictures. Some groups have pushed for retaining one car as a curiosity.

The Rail Fans, for instance, have suggested that the track-age between Calhoun and Harriet be kept along with one car, which would make the run for the benefit of lake crowds.

Others have suggested taking one car, such as old 1166 with its nearly half-century of service, and turning it into a public transportation museum.

But the deadline is fast approaching for such "save 1166" or similar ideas.

★ ★ ★ ★
RETIRES

Motorman Rings Up Last Fare

FRIDAY literally marked the end of the line for a Minneapolis streetcar motorman who had been riding trolleys since Aug. 25, 1919.

Ernest T. Carlson, 65, 3829 Fifteenth avenue S., picked a significant day on which to retire: the day the last of the city's streetcar lines—Como and Oak-Harriet—were converted to buses.

He was a conductor prior to advent of one-man streetcars. Most of his service was on the Bloomington-Columbia Heights and Plymouth-E. Twenty-fifth street lines. He got to know many of his passengers personally, and some of them wrote letters of commendation.

First item on his retirement calendar is a trip with his wife today to Winnipeg, Canada.

The following newspaper story, published on June 19, 1954, the day after abandonment of the system, is reprinted with permission from the Minneapolis Star and Tribune.

City Trolleys Come to End of the Line

Progress pulled the trolley off the track in Minneapolis early today.

The last of the lemon-yellow trams rumbled into the East side station at 1:34 a.m. today, hauling 65 years of electric streetcar history in with it.

Buses now roll over the thoroughfares where once the old joke held forth: "A trolley just went by here"—"How do you know?"—"I can see its tracks."

Mayor Hoyer, who won a streetcar on a raffle during Friday ceremonies, and will present it to the Hennepin County Historical society, proclaimed today as "Good-bye Streetcar—Hello Bus day" in the city.

Some die-hards, about 100 members of Minnesota Railfans association, were determined to get the very "last" ride of all the "last" rides taken Friday night and early today. They arranged an all-day tour today on two chartered cars over all trackage still electrified.

Several residents staged trolley parties on final runs Friday night, and many passengers returned home—by bus—carrying with them souvenir signs, fare boxes and leather straps torn from the trolleys.

Arthur O. Orrben, motorman with 43 years of service, was at the controls of old 1166 for the final regular run.

Among those on hand for the demise of the University of Minnesota inter-campus trolley was Clyde H. Bailey, dean emeritus of the university Institute of Agriculture.

Bailey can recall the days prior to installation of the line, 40 years ago, when he had to hike from Como avenue to his teaching job on the campus.

The new buses involve no route changes on the Minneapolis part of the line. St. Paul route changes involve: From Minneapolis to St. Paul, the buses turn off Como up Hendon, south on Cleveland, east on Carter, north on Coffey Hall street to a main bus stop in front of Coffey hall. Returning to the Minneapolis campus, the buses travel west on Bu-

ford, north on Cleveland, west on Hoyt and south on Northrop to Hendon and Como. There are two stops on Hendon and two on Hoyt.

Official ceremonies Friday afternoon saw 320 persons, guests of Twin City Rapid Transit Co., served lunch aboard eight trams as they moved through the loop on their final trip to the Snelling shops in St. Paul.

Helping pilot one trolley were TCRT President Fred Ossanna and Sen. Humphrey (D., Minn.). Ossanna put the torch to one of the streetcars at the Snelling avenue shops.

One of the placards of the day was a pun: "Minneapolis is going off its trolley." Somehow it won't seem the same to talk about a fellow running out of gas in his head.

Ed. Note: The newspaper article states that Minneapolis mayor Eric Hoyer won a streetcar in a raffle and was going to donate it to the Hennepin County Historical Society. It is uncertain if the society ever got the streetcar. A call to the society in April found nobody who knew anything about that supposed event. The lady on the phone said, "I've been here 15 years and I can tell you that there is no streetcar around here!"



M.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Station			
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	Harriet L.
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31		Lak. St.
P.M.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.				Lines not intersecting Lake St.
																8th St.
																Snelling Av.
																Lines not intersecting Snelling Av.
																Emergency
																West East

Good only on the first car connecting or transferring to the leaving transfer point punch only on date and after time punch. Use only for one person to whom it is issued and who transfers to the transfer point punch. The transfer point punch is good only for one person to get out of the loop. No breaking time limit in any other direction. If used subject to above conditions. This transfer is good for the loop district covering line when the junction is a connecting point with the named or mentioned line punching in the same direction.

Other Station: **COMO-HARRIET LINE**

37 024436

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	1	2	3	4	5	6	Station
7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	A.M.
25	26	27	28	29	30	31												Continuation
																		Station
																		Emergency
																		Final Transfer
																		W.

SEE OTHER SIDE

COMO - HARRIET

92 005453

Como-Harriet streetcar line transfers—41 years apart. The upper transfer was punched on May 30, 1913 while the lower one was punched on the last day of streetcar service—June 18, 1954. A facsimile of the 1913 transfer is given to passengers on MTM's Como-Harriet line who ride only one way and is good for a return trip later. Transfers from the collections of Mike Buck (1913) and Fred Rhodes (1954).

The following newspaper story, published on June 21, 1954, three days after abandonment of the system, is reprinted with permission from the Minneapolis Star and Tribune.

CONVERSION HEADACHE IS OVER

Beef, Coffee, Jute Offered for Streetcars

By LARRY FITZMAURICE
Minneapolis Star Staff Writer

PATRONS OF TWIN CITY

Rapid Transit Co. rode to work on an all-bus operation today, but Fred A. Ossanna, president, recalled that there were some weeks during the conversion from trolley cars when officials didn't know whether they were in the transportation business, the beef, coffee, jute or marble business.

When Ossanna, then chairman of the board, announced three years ago plans to convert the streetcar system to buses, the company's biggest need was for cash to go ahead with the project.

The executives envisioned junking power plants, 750 streetcars, 400 miles of track and overhead lines, car manufacturing and repair shops and other equipment and right of way valued at 20 million dollars.

New buses costing 15 million dollars were to replace them.

In some of the nation's leading financial houses which Ossanna approached for credit to buy the new equipment, the plan was looked upon as a form of economic suicide, Ossanna recalled.

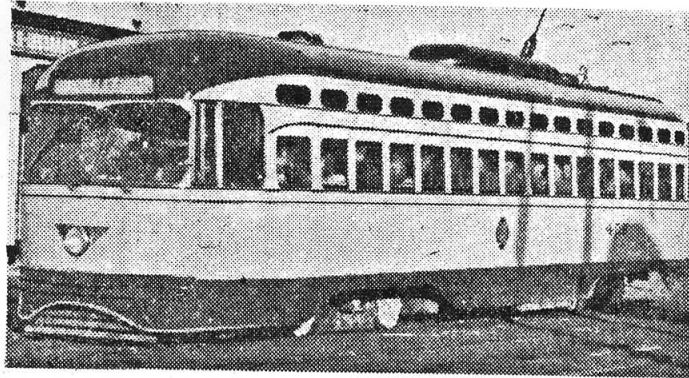
In their desperate attempt to raise cash, Ossanna and his staff contacted agents in many lands in an effort to sell some of the company's late model rolling stock.

This included 141 streamlined PCC streetcars which had been added to the Minneapolis system between 1946 and 1949 at a cost of \$3,500,000.

Ossanna revealed today that the company had bids from Calcutta, India; Rome, Italy; Buenos Aires, Argentina, and Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

The complexities of international trade being what they are, Ossanna said he quickly ran into some snags.

Calcutta would buy the cars providing Ossanna would take payment in jute bags; Rome



TROLLEY SALES HIT SOME SNAGS
Ossanna wouldn't take jute bags

wanted them if the company would accept equal value in Italian marble; Buenos Aires was willing to swap for Argentine beef, and Rio de Janeiro was anxious to make a deal in exchange for Brazilian coffee.

Eventually some leads began developing closer to home.

Subsequently, deals were closed sending 20 cars to Cleveland, Ohio, for \$260,000, 30 to the Public Service Co. of New Jersey for \$300,000 and 91 to Mexico City for \$1,200,000.

In recent months TCRT has added to this salvage cash pile by selling its power plant near the Third Avenue bridge to Northern States Power Co. for \$1,500,000; the Lake Street and East side stations in Minneapolis and the Duluth street station, 1177 E. Seventh street, St. Paul, to Mid-Continent Development and Construction Co. for \$300,000 and the company garage at 164 W. Fifth street, St. Paul, for \$105,000.

The company also decided to the city of Minneapolis a section of the Como-Oak-Harriet right of way, which had been carried on the TCRT books at \$685,212, as part of a settlement involving an additional \$1,200,000 for track removal and paving.

It also sold scattered parcels of land along its seven-mile right of way between St. Paul and Mahtomedi and some other real estate for \$50,000, cleaned

up scrap iron, copper, lead and other metals around its shops and realized approximately \$150,000.

With this money coming in, Ossanna revealed, the company was in a position to bargain with General Motors Corp. for purchase or lease of 525 new diesel-powered buses and spend \$1,090,000 expanding its garage facilities for the full fleet of 886 vehicles.

The company expects to house approximately 300 buses each in former streetcar barns at Twenty-fifth and Washington avenues N., Thirty-first street and Nicollet avenue, Minneapolis, and Snelling and University avenues, St. Paul.

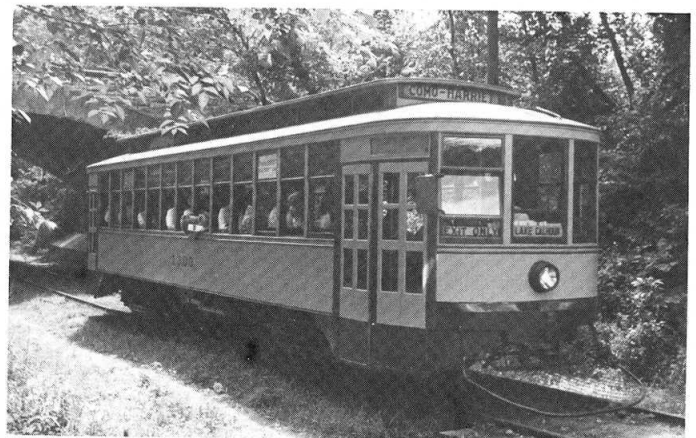
Elimination of the streetcars, sale of real estate and salvage are expected to save the company hundreds of thousands of dollars in personal and real estate taxes annually, Ossanna said.

Offsetting these savings, however, will be increased taxes on the company's bus fleet in the way of licenses and other fees, plus taxes the company will have to pay indirectly for fuel. Ossanna estimated that state and federal taxes on diesel fuel and gasoline will total \$700,000 a year.

Under the combined operation it has cost the company an average of 74 cents a mile of route traveled in recent years. With a 100 per cent bus operation, the company will be shooting at an average of 60 cents a mile.

TCRT reached an all-time high employment peak of 3,721 persons in November, 1949. It was 2,997 when Ossanna became head of the company in March, 1951.

With the complete elimination of two man operations, the consolidation of bus routes and other changes, employment has been stabilized at about 2,000, Ossanna said.



Restored 76-year-old streetcar 1300 in museum service today on the single-track 104-year-old Lake Harriet right-of-way. The car is northbound just past the William Berry bridge. May the Como-Harriet streetcar line run forever! Photo by Larry Schreiber.



Como-Harriet PCC car 437, with its sign turned to "Como Ave. to Eustis," laid over on the France Av. loop at 44th and France before heading back to the St. Paul city limits in July

1953. MTM hopes to have one of these original TCRT PCC cars back on the Como-Harriet line in the not too distant future. Photo by C. R. Scholes.

MTM Membership Application

The all-volunteer nonprofit Minnesota Transportation Museum was formed in 1962 for the purpose of finding, restoring and operating vintage rail equipment for the education and the enjoyment of the public as a reminder of days gone by. If you like what you see in this magazine, how about becoming a member and helping us? It is a rich experience filled with fun and tradition. Join us today!

- ☐ MTM FAMILY membership (\$20 per year). All members over 18 eligible to operate museum equipment.
- ☐ MTM ACTIVE membership (\$15 per year). Eligible to operate museum equipment.
- ☐ MTM ASSOCIATE membership (\$10 per year).

All members receive the bi-monthly **Minnegazette** magazines at their homes.

- ☐ I do not wish to join MTM, but would like to contribute to the restoration (tax deductible).

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Mail to: **Minnesota Transportation Museum, Inc.**

P.O. Box 1300, Hopkins, MN 55343



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August 2021

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